

Official Report of the
One Hundred Seventieth
Semiannual General

CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Conference Center
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 7 and 8, 2000

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Report of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 7, 2000, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 7 and 8, 2000. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 7, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America. These proceedings were also broadcast live over the Internet.

General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

First Presidency: Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B.

Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

Presidency of the Seventy: L. Aldin Porter, Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Marlin K. Jensen, David E. Sorensen, Ben B. Banks, and Dennis B. Neuenschwander

First Quorum of the Seventy: Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, John K. Carmack, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Vaughn J. Featherstone, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, Donald L. Hallstrom, F. Melvin Hammond, Harold G. Hillam, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, W. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L Kofford, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Glenn L. Pace, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Carl B. Pratt, Ronald A. Rasband, Lynn G. Robbins, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, Lance B. Wickman, and W. Craig Zwick

Second Quorum of the Seventy: Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorim, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Douglas L. Callister, Val R. Christensen, Darwin B. Christenson, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Keith Crockett, Adhemar Damiani, Duane B. Gerrard, H. Aldridge Gillespie, Ronald T. Halverson, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Robert C. Oaks, Stephen B. Oveson, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Ned B. Roueché, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, David R. Stone, H. Bruce Stucki, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten, Richard H.

Winkel, Richard B. Wirthlin, Ray H. Wood, and Robert S. Wood

Presiding Bishopric: H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Conference Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 7, 2000, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist. To begin this session, the choir sang "Glory to God on High." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand and at the overflow locations in the Tabernacle and Assembly Hall. We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Conference Center.

We extend a special welcome to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and to the owners and operators of the many television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world. We are also pleased to make available these proceedings via the Internet at lds.org. We also express appreciation to other Internet service providers who have given of their time in providing access to the conference.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Mack Wilberg, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Glory to God on High" and will now favor us with "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone.

The choir sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone offered the invocation.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A great family in reverence and worship

My brothers and sisters, what a wonderful occasion this is! I know of nothing else like it in all the world. We are gathered this morning as a great family in reverence and worship of the Lord our God. We are of one faith and one doctrine. We speak words of testimony concerning God our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son. We declare with conviction and certainty that they have restored in this last dispensation The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The great voices of radio, television, and cable are now joined by the Internet to carry our words literally to the ends of the earth. To meetinghouses scattered far and wide, the satellite will beam our signal to congregations large and small. And

Saints across the earth will listen in their own homes to the proceedings of this great conference by means of the Internet.

Workmen have labored long and hard in preparing for this great occasion. We thank each one of them for his devoted service. Tomorrow we shall dedicate this magnificent Conference Center and other facilities. An important chapter in the history of our people will then have been written.

Welcome to each of you, wherever you may be. May we all be touched by the Holy Spirit as we meet together in solemn worship is my humble prayer. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Lessons learned from suffering

After recovering from three major surgeries which have prevented me from speaking in the past two general conferences, what a joy it is to be able to stand in this beautiful Conference Center today to teach and bear testimony to those who desire to hear the word of the Lord.

In the past two years, I have waited upon the Lord for mortal lessons to be taught me through periods of physical pain, mental anguish, and pondering. I learned that constant, intense pain is a great consecrating purifier that humbles us and draws us closer to God's Spirit. If we listen and obey, we will be guided by His Spirit and do His will in our daily endeavors.

There were times when I have asked a few direct questions in my prayers, such as, "What lessons dost Thou want me to learn from these experiences?"

As I studied the scriptures during this critical period of my life, the veil was thin and answers were given to me as they were recorded in lives of others who had gone through even more severe trials.

"My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high" (D&C 121:7-8).

Dark moments of depression were quickly dispelled by the light of the gospel as the Spirit brought peace and comfort with assurances that all would be well.

Enduring to the end

On a few occasions I told the Lord that I had surely learned the lessons to be taught and that it wouldn't be necessary for me to endure any more suffering. Such entreaties seemed to be of no avail, for it

was made clear to me that this purifying process of testing was to be endured in the Lord's time and in the Lord's own way. It is one thing to teach, "Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:42). It is another to live it. I also learned that I would not be left alone to meet these trials and tribulations but that guardian angels would attend me. There were some that were near angels in the form of doctors, nurses, and most of all my sweet companion, Mary. And on occasion, when the Lord so desired, I was to be comforted with visitations of heavenly hosts that brought comfort and eternal reassurances in my time of need.

Though my personal suffering is not to be compared to the Savior's agony in Gethsemane, I gained a better understanding of His Atonement and His suffering. In His time of agony, He asked His Father, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39). His Father in Heaven sent an angel to sustain and comfort Him in His time of need (see Luke 22:43).

Jesus chose not to be released from this world until He had endured to the end and completed the mission He had been sent to accomplish for mankind. Upon the cross of Calvary, Jesus commended His spirit to His Father with a simple statement: "It is finished" (John 19:30). Having endured to the end, He was released from mortality.

We too must endure to the end. The Book of Mormon teaches, "Unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved" (2 Nephi 31:16).

The covenant of baptism

The experiences of the last two years have made me stronger in spirit and have given me courage to testify more boldly to the world the deep feelings of my heart. I stand before you today with a resolve to teach the gospel principles like the proph-

ets of old—without the fear of man, speaking clearly with plain talk, and teaching simple gospel truths.

In that spirit, I wish to speak on the ordinance of baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, which takes us out of this world and into the kingdom of God.

There is a familiar phrase: to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world (see John 17:11, 14–16). Our mortal existence is necessary to fulfill the plan of salvation. We must therefore live in this world, but we must also resist the worldly influences that are ever before us.

Being in the kingdom and of the kingdom

Jesus taught, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). These words led me to ponder more concerning His kingdom. I concluded that when we are baptized by immersion by one with the proper priesthood authority and choose to follow our Savior, we then are *in* His kingdom and *of* His kingdom.

Being of the kingdom of God requires that we heed the Savior's admonition "Follow thou me" (2 Nephi 31:10). Nephi taught that we follow Jesus by keeping Heavenly Father's commandments: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?" (2 Nephi 31:10).

At baptism we make a covenant with our Heavenly Father that we are willing to come into His kingdom and keep His commandments from that time forward, even though we still live in the world. We are reminded from the Book of Mormon that our baptism is a covenant to "stand as witnesses of God [and His kingdom] *at all times and in all things, and in all places* that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life" (Mosiah 18:9; italics added).

Understanding covenant changes lives

When we understand our baptismal covenant and the gift of the Holy Ghost, it will change our lives and establish our total allegiance to the kingdom of God. When temptations come our way, if we will listen, the Holy Ghost will remind us that we have promised to remember our Savior and obey the commandments of God.

President Brigham Young said: "All Latter-day Saints enter the new and everlasting covenant when they enter this Church. They covenant to cease sustaining, upholding and cherishing the kingdom of the Devil and the kingdoms of this world. They enter the new and everlasting covenant to sustain the Kingdom of God and no other kingdom. They take a vow of the most solemn kind, before the heavens and earth, . . . that they will sustain truth and righteousness instead of wickedness and falsehood, and build up the Kingdom of God, instead of the kingdoms of this world" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 160).

Jesus' baptism set the example

Entering into the kingdom of God is so important that Jesus was baptized to show us "the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which [we] should enter" (2 Nephi 31:9). "Notwithstanding he being holy, he sheweth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments" (2 Nephi 31:7).

Born of a mortal mother, Jesus was baptized to fulfill His Father's commandment that sons and daughters of God should be baptized. He set the example for all of us to humble ourselves before our Heavenly Father. We are all welcome to come into the waters of baptism. He was baptized to witness to His Father that

He would be obedient in keeping His commandments. He was baptized to show us that we should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (see 2 Nephi 31:4-9).

As we follow the example of Jesus, we demonstrate that we will repent and be obedient in keeping the commandments of our Father in Heaven. We humble ourselves with a broken heart and a contrite spirit as we recognize our sins and seek forgiveness of our trespasses (see 3 Nephi 9:20). We covenant that we are willing to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ and always remember Him.

"For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.

"And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:17-18).

This is the promise that we were given when we came into the kingdom through baptism and when hands were laid upon our heads, the gift of the Holy Ghost was bestowed upon us, and we were confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—which means we became "fellowcitizens with the saints" in the "household of God" (Ephesians 2:19) and "should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

Teach children the significance of baptism

We cannot take lightly the law given to us to teach our children the doctrine of repentance; faith in Christ, the Son of the living God; and baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands when eight years old, which is the age of accountability appointed by God (see D&C 68:25-27). We need to do a better job of teaching our children and our grandchildren to understand what it means to enter the kingdom of God, for we will be held accountable.

Many members of the Church do not fully understand what happened when they went into the waters of baptism. It is

very important for us to understand the marvelous gift of the remission of sins, but there is much more. Do you understand and do your children understand that when they are baptized they are changed forever? Adult converts to the Church often have a better understanding of this transformation because they feel the contrast as they come out of the world into the kingdom of God.

When we are baptized, we take upon ourselves the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Taking upon us His name is one of the most significant experiences we have in life. Yet sometimes we pass through that experience without having a full understanding.

How many of our children—how many of us—really understand that when we were baptized, we took upon us not only the name of Christ but also the law of obedience?

How the gift of the Holy Ghost helps us

Each week in sacrament meeting we promise to remember the atoning sacrifice of our Savior as we renew our baptismal covenant. We promise to do as the Savior did—to be obedient to the Father and always keep His commandments. The blessing we receive in return is to always have His Spirit to be with us.

The gift of the Holy Ghost, given to us when we are confirmed, gives us the ability to discern the difference between the giving ways of the kingdom of God and the taking practices of the world. The Holy Ghost gives us the strength and courage to conduct our lives in the ways of the kingdom of God and is the source of our testimony of the Father and the Son. As we obey the will of our Father in Heaven, this priceless gift of the Holy Ghost will be with us continually.

We need the Holy Ghost as our constant companion to help us make better choices in the decisions that confront us daily. Our young men and women are

bombarded with ugly things of the world. Companionship with the Spirit will give them the strength to resist evil and, when necessary, repent and return to the strait and narrow path. None of us are immune from the temptations of the adversary. We all need the fortification available through the Holy Ghost. Mothers and fathers should prayerfully invite the Holy Spirit to dwell in their dedicated homes. Having the gift of the Holy Ghost helps family members make wise choices—choices that will help them return with their families to their Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, to live with Them eternally.

Loving God and our fellowmen

The scriptures confirm that the truly converted do more than just forsake the enticements of the world. They love God and their fellowmen. Their minds and hearts are centered on the Savior's atoning sacrifice. From the moment of their respective conversions, Enos, Alma the Younger, Paul, and others turned wholeheartedly to the task of bringing themselves and their fellowmen to God. Worldly power and possessions lost their former significance. The sons of Mosiah refused an earthly kingdom and risked their lives for the sake of others. These faithful sons were driven by the hope that they might be able to help save even one soul—thus winning for themselves and their brethren a place in God's eternal kingdom.

Effects baptism should have in daily life

By choosing to be in His kingdom, we separate—not isolate—ourselves from the world. Our dress will be modest, our thoughts pure, our language clean. The movies and television we watch, the music we listen to, the books, magazines, and newspapers we read will be uplifting. We will choose friends who encourage

our eternal goals, and we will treat others with kindness. We will shun the vices of immorality, gambling, tobacco, liquor, and illicit drugs. Our Sunday activities will reflect the commandment of God to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. We will follow the example of Jesus Christ in the way we treat others. We will live to be worthy to enter the house of the Lord.

We will be examples "of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12).

We will receive "a mighty change . . . in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually." We will keep our "covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things . . . all the remainder of our days" (Mosiah 5:2, 5).

We will demonstrate that we "are desirous to . . . be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:8-9).

Teaching about baptism

I urge all parents to prepare your children and all missionaries to prepare your converts for the sacred baptismal ordinance. Teach them of its significance so that their baptism will be impressed upon their spiritual memory for the rest of their lives. Take them to sacrament meeting weekly to renew their baptismal covenants through the ordinance of the sacrament. Be a good example for them to follow. Teach them that because of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, the way they look at the things of the world should change. A mighty change must take place in their hearts and in their minds so they

will be able to turn from temptations of the world and from that time forward put their "heart, might, mind and strength" (D&C 4:2) into being citizens in the kingdom of God.

Gratitude for baptism and confirmation

I feel great gratitude for my baptism and confirmation into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I am grateful for the spiritual strength and guidance the gift of the Holy Ghost has given me throughout my life. I am thankful for good parents and teachers who impressed the significance of baptism upon me so that the memory and feelings of that occasion have been an enduring influence throughout my life.

I testify of the divinity of the gospel, restored in this latter day. I testify of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the efficacy and power of the priesthood and its gospel ordinances. I pray that each of us as members of His kingdom will understand that our baptism and confirmation is the gateway *into* His kingdom. When we enter, we covenant to be *of* His kingdom—forever! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Father in Heaven."

President Hinckley

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Father in Heaven."

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy. We will then ask Elders Alexander B. Morrison and Loren C. Dunn, who will be given emeritus status during this conference, to bear their testimonies.

Elder D. Todd Christofferson

Doctrine of the redemption of the dead

Christian theologians have long wrestled with the question, What is the destiny of the countless billions who have lived and died with no knowledge of Jesus?¹ With the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ has come the understanding of how the unbaptized dead are redeemed and how God can be “a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also.”²

While yet in life, Jesus prophesied that He would also preach to the dead.³ Peter tells us this happened in the interval between the Savior’s Crucifixion and Resurrection.⁴ President Joseph F. Smith witnessed in vision that the Savior visited the spirit world and “from among the righteous [spirits] . . . organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness. . . . These were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, [and] the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.”⁵

The doctrine that the living can provide baptism and other essential ordinances to the dead, vicariously, was revealed anew to the Prophet Joseph Smith.⁶ He learned that the spirits awaiting resurrection are not only offered individual salvation but that they can be bound in heaven as husband and wife and be sealed to their fathers and mothers of all generations past and have sealed to them their children of all generations future. The Lord instructed the Prophet that these sacred rites are appropriately performed only in a house built to His name—a temple.⁷

The principle of vicarious service should not seem strange to any Christian. In the baptism of a living person, the officiator acts, by proxy, in place of the Savior. And is it not the central tenet of our faith that Christ’s sacrifice atones for our

sins by vicariously satisfying the demands of justice for us? As President Gordon B. Hinckley has expressed:

“I think that vicarious work for the dead more nearly approaches the vicarious sacrifice of the Savior Himself than any other work of which I know. It is given with love, without hope of compensation, or repayment or anything of the kind. What a glorious principle.”⁸

Some have misunderstood and suppose that deceased souls “are being baptised into the Mormon faith without their knowledge”⁹ or that “people who once belonged to other faiths can have the Mormon faith retroactively imposed on them.”¹⁰ They assume that we somehow have power to force a soul in matters of faith. Of course, we do not. God gave man his agency from the beginning.¹¹ “The dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God,”¹² but only if they accept those ordinances. The Church does not list them on its rolls or count them in its membership.

Our anxiety to redeem the dead, and the time and resources we put behind that commitment, are, above all, an expression of our witness concerning Jesus Christ. It constitutes as powerful a statement as we can make concerning His divine character and mission. It testifies, first, of Christ’s Resurrection; second, of the infinite reach of His Atonement; third, that He is the sole source of salvation; fourth, that He has established the conditions for salvation; and fifth, that He will come again.

The power of Christ’s Resurrection

As regards the Resurrection, Paul asked, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?”¹³ We are baptized for the dead because we know that they will rise. “The

soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.”¹⁴ “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”¹⁵

It matters tremendously what we do in relation to those who have gone before, because they live today as spirits and shall live again as immortal souls, and that because of Jesus Christ. We believe His words when He said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”¹⁶ By the baptisms we perform in behalf of the dead, we testify that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. . . . For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”¹⁷

The infinite reach of Christ's Atonement

By identifying our ancestors and performing for them the saving ordinances they could not themselves perform, we are testifying of the infinite reach of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Christ “died for all.”¹⁸ “He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”¹⁹

“God is no respecter of persons:

“But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”²⁰

“Doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he saith: Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price.”²¹

Our Lord “inviteth . . . all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen;

and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.”²²

It is inconceivable that this invitation, universally extended in life, would be rescinded for those who had not heard it before they died. With Paul, we are persuaded that death poses no such obstacle: “Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”²³

Christ is the sole source of salvation

Our anxiety to ensure that our kindred dead are offered baptism in Jesus’ name is testament to the fact that Jesus Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life” and that “no man cometh unto the Father, but by [Him].”²⁴ Peter proclaimed:

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”²⁵

“There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”²⁶

Some contemporary Christians, concerned for the billions who have died without a knowledge of Jesus Christ, have begun to wonder if there truly is only “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”²⁷ To believe that Jesus is the only savior, they say, is arrogant, narrow-minded, and intolerant. We say, however, that this is a false dilemma. There is no injustice in there being but One through whom salvation may come, when that One and His salvation are offered to every soul, without exception. We need not tamper with the doctrine or temper the good news of Christ.

Conditions of salvation set by Christ

Because we believe that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, we also accept His au-

thority to establish the conditions by which we may receive His grace. Otherwise we would not concern ourselves with being baptized for the dead.

Jesus confirmed that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.”²⁸ Specifically, He said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”²⁹ This means we must “repent, and be baptized every one . . . in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and . . . receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”³⁰

Notwithstanding He was sinless, Jesus Christ Himself was baptized and received the Holy Ghost to witness “unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments”³¹ and to show us “the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which [we] should enter, he having set the example before [us].” And He said, “He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do.”³²

There are no exceptions granted; none are needed. As many as will believe and be baptized—including by proxy—and endure in faith shall be saved, “not only those who believed after [Christ] came in the meridian of time, in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he came.”³³ It is for this reason that the gospel is preached “also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”³⁴

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

Our work for the dead bears witness that Jesus Christ will come again to this earth. In the final verses of the Old Testament, Jehovah declared:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”³⁵

In an inspired commentary on this scripture, the Prophet Joseph Smith stated, “The earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other—and behold what is that subject? It is the baptism for the dead.”³⁶

The vicarious ordinances we perform in temples, beginning with baptism, make possible an eternal welding link between generations that fulfills the purpose of the earth’s creation. Without this, “the whole earth would be utterly wasted at [Christ’s] coming.”³⁷ Elijah has, in fact, come as promised to confer the priesthood power that turns hearts and establishes the welding links between the fathers and the children so that once again what is bound on earth “shall be bound in heaven.”³⁸ When he came, Elijah declared, “The keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.”³⁹

We are anxiously about the task of searching out our fathers and mothers of generations past and binding them to us and us to them. Is not this the strongest possible evidence of our conviction that Jesus Christ will come again to reign upon the earth? We know He will, and we know what He expects we will have done in preparation for His return.

The dead will be redeemed

In the scriptures, the spirits of the dead are sometimes referred to as being in darkness or in prison.⁴⁰ Contemplating God’s glorious plan for the redemption of these, His children, the Prophet Joseph Smith penned this psalm:

“Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth

into singing. Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who hath ordained, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; for the prisoners shall go free."⁴¹

Our charge extends as far and as deep as the love of God to encompass His children of every time and place. Our efforts on behalf of the dead bear eloquent witness that Jesus Christ is the divine Redeemer of all mankind. His grace and promises reach even those who in life do not find Him. Because of Him, the prisoners shall indeed go free. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See John Sanders, introduction to *What About Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized*, by Gabriel Fackre, Ronald H. Nash, and John Sanders (1995), 9. There are several theories concerning the "unevangelized" dead, ranging from an inexplicable denial of salvation, to dreams or other divine intervention at the moment of death, to salvation for all, even without faith in Christ. A few believe that souls hear of Jesus after death. None explain how to satisfy Jesus' requirement that a man must be born of water and spirit to enter the kingdom of God (see John 3:3–5). Lacking the knowledge once had in the early Church, these earnest seekers have been "forced to choose between a weak law that allow[s] the unbaptized to enter heaven, and a cruel God who damn[s] the innocent" (Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity* [1987], 101).
2. Alma 42:15.
3. See John 5:25.
4. See 1 Peter 3:18–19.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 138:30, 33.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 124; 128; 132; *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee (1984), 486; *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (1991), 49.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:29–36. Today's expansive construction of temples across the world has as one of its primary purposes to provide the place where ordinances essential to salvation may be performed for those who, in life, were not privileged to receive them.
8. "Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley," *Ensign*, Jan. 1998, 73.
9. Ben Fenton, "Mormons Use Secret British War Files 'to Save Souls,'" *Telegraph* (London), 15 Feb. 1999.
10. Greg Stott, "Ancestral Passion," *Equinox*, April/May 1998, 45.
11. See Moses 7:32; see also Alma 5:33–36; 42:27.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 138:58.
13. 1 Corinthians 15:29.
14. Alma 40:23.
15. Romans 14:9.
16. John 11:25.
17. 1 Corinthians 15:22, 25–26.
18. 2 Corinthians 5:15.
19. 1 John 2:2.
20. Acts 10:34–35.
21. 2 Nephi 26:25.
22. 2 Nephi 26:33.
23. Romans 8:38–39.
24. John 14:6.
25. Acts 4:12; see also 2 Nephi 25:20; Mosiah 5:8.
26. 1 Timothy 2:5.
27. Ephesians 4:5. See, for example, John Hick, "Jesus and the World Religions," in John Hick, ed., *The Myth of God Incarnate* (1977), 180.
28. Matthew 7:14.
29. John 3:5.
30. Acts 2:38.
31. 2 Nephi 31:7; see also Matthew 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22; John 1:29–34.
32. 2 Nephi 31:9, 12.
33. Doctrine and Covenants 20:26.
34. 1 Peter 4:6.
35. Malachi 4:5–6; see also 3 Nephi 25:5–6; Doctrine and Covenants 2.
36. Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
37. Doctrine and Covenants 2:3; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.

38. Matthew 16:19; see also Matthew 18:18; Doctrine and Covenants 132:46.
 39. Doctrine and Covenants 110:16.
 40. See Isaiah 24:22; 1 Peter 3:19; Alma 40:12–13; Doctrine and Covenants 38:5; 138:22, 30. Even the righteous spirits are spoken of as faithful “captives” awaiting deliverance from the bands of death (see D&C 138:18–19).
 41. Doctrine and Covenants 128:22.

Elder Alexander B. Morrison

Very early in Jesus’ ministry, two disciples came to Him and asked, “Master, . . . where dwellest thou?” Jesus’ brief yet profound reply, “Come and see,” provides the basis for my few poor remarks today (John 1:38–39).

Seek to know the Savior

“Come and see,” come seeking to know Him, and I promise you will find Him and see Him in His true character as the risen, redeeming Savior of the world. “Come and see,” and you will recognize Him as the Christ of the empty sepulchre, the conqueror of Calvary, who broke the bands of death and rose triumphant from the tomb to bring immortality to all and eternal life to the faithful. He is the “lamb without blemish and without spot,” foreordained in His messianic role “before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:19–20). “He was wounded for our transgressions [and] bruised for our iniquities: . . . with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

He will heal and strengthen you

“Come and see,” and in your coming lay your burdens at His feet. Give away all your sins that you might see and know Him (see Alma 22:18). “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” He said, “and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28–29).

Come unto Him, and He will take away your sins and heal your soul, though

it be sick with sin. He will replace hatred with love and selfishness with service. He will strengthen your shoulders to better bear your burdens and give you new courage and hope for the journey ahead.

He will teach you who you are

“Come and see,” and as you do so your eyes will be opened and you will *really* see, perhaps for the first time, who *you* are and who *He* is. You will come to see yourself as a child of God, of divine parentage, possessed of infinite capacities to grow spiritually and become more like Him. You will come to understand that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26), and you will see all men everywhere as your brothers and all women as your sisters, with all that implies in terms of sibling responsibility. You will see that “he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . and all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33).

You will find His Church

“Come and see,” and as you do so you will find His Church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is a church directed on earth by living prophets, seers, and revelators, but its head is no mortal man, but Jesus, the Lord God Omnipotent Himself. As you “come and see,” you will find a happy people—an optimistic and joyful people—who, while struggling to overcome the usual faults and foibles of humanity, yet strive to be

better, to do good to all men, to build the city of God wherein all may dwell together in righteousness. As you "come and see," you will find a people with a deep and abiding concern for the poor and the needy, a people who reach out a helping hand to aid the widow and orphan, the sick and afflicted, the poor and oppressed. "Come and see" the fruits of gospel living. Taste them for yourself, and you will find them sweet and delicious. As you come to know "that when ye are in the service of your fellow [men] ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17), you will seek to wear out your life in the service of the Master.

"Come and see"

I finish where I began: Jesus' statement "Come and see" provides both an invitation and a promise to all people everywhere. Come to Him; see Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords; recognize in Him the great Messiah, who will come again with healing in His wings to set His people free (see Malachi 4:2; 2 Nephi 25:13; "Come, O Thou King of Kings," *Hymns*, no. 59). He will wrap you about in the cloak of His redeeming love, and your life will be changed forever.

Of that I testify, as one of His servants, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Loren C. Dunn

Dedication of the Boston Temple

Just six days ago President Gordon B. Hinckley, accompanied by President Boyd K. Packer and Elder Neil L. Andersen and their wives, dedicated the Boston Massachusetts Temple. The dedication came at the end of an open house that saw over 83,000 people go through the temple. There were over 16,000 who attended the four sessions of the dedication, either at the temple or at nearby stake centers.

While every temple is important and offers the same ordinances necessary for eternal life, this dedication was, in many ways, historic. This is the first temple in a city recognized as the birthplace of freedom in what was then the New World. The city is also recognized as the early home of many of the first leaders and members of the Church. The dedication seemed to represent the coming together of the great heritage of America and the sacred roots of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some in attendance had previous ties to Boston and the surrounding area. Most were there because they live there and were rejoicing in the dedication of a tem-

ple in their midst. All were there as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God," as President Hinckley said at the cornerstone ceremony, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," with Jesus Christ Himself as "the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:19-20).

There were native residents of the area who came, many with their children and grandchildren—three generations of worthy temple recommend holders.

In the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith asked the Lord to break off the yoke of the persecutions of that day (see D&C 109:31-33, 47). While challenges still remain, we are seeing the yoke of misunderstanding and prejudice being broken in this era of temple building and open houses.

Mirrors in the sealing rooms

In the temple, in the sealing rooms, we find mirrors that are on opposite walls from each other. As a person looks in the mirror, he can see his reflection going

back from one generation to another, as it were, forward from one generation to another, and there is no end, signifying the eternal nature of us all. Perhaps there is another reason for the mirrors situated in that way. It speaks of all who came before us and all who will come after us.

Testimony

I think of the words of the Prophet Joseph: "And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!" (D&C 76:22).

For all who have borne witness of this work and all who will yet bear witness of this work, in my day and my time, I bear that witness and testimony to you this day at this time. I know that there is a God in heaven, and I know He lives. I know God lives. I *know* He lives. I know He lives, and I know that He is the Father of all of us. I know that God our Father is in this work in great congregations such as this, and in the smallest branch and the smallest congregation God is in this work. I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior and our Redeemer and that He has purchased us by the shedding of His blood and by the anguish which He suffered in Gethsemane. I know that apostles and prophets are at the foundation of this work, beginning with the Prophet Joseph and coming to President Gordon

B. Hinckley this day. This, my brothers and sisters, is the gospel of Jesus Christ. This work is true. May the Lord bless us to live by it. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to us, followed by Elders Alexander B. Morrison and Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy. Brother Dunn, Brother Morrison, and Brother Busche, who have served as members of the First Quorum for many years, are being given emeritus status at this conference, together with their associates of the Second Quorum, who have served so faithfully and well and have gone far and wide in carrying forward this great work across the world. We thank each one of them and pray for the blessings of the Lord upon them.

The choir and congregation will now sing "Redeemer of Israel." Following the singing, Sister Margaret D. Nadauld, Young Women general president, will address us. She will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Sister Margaret D. Nadauld

Faithful women have a glorious mission

It is a remarkable blessing to be a daughter of God today. We have the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are blessed to have the priesthood restored to the earth. We are led by a prophet of God who holds all of the priesthood keys. I love and honor President Gordon B. Hinckley and all of our brethren who bear the priesthood worthily.

I am inspired by the lives of good and faithful women. From the beginning of time the Lord has placed significant trust in them. He has sent us to earth for such a time as this to perform a grand and glorious mission. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that even before we were born, we were among those who "received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth

in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men" (D&C 138:56). What a wonderful vision that gives us of our purpose on earth.

Where much is given, much is required. Our Heavenly Father asks His daughters to walk in virtue, to live in righteousness so that we can fulfill our life's mission and His purposes. He wants us to be successful, and He will help us as we seek His help.

Women were given special qualities

That women were born into this earth female was determined long before mortal birth, as were the divine differences of male and female. I love the clarity of the teachings of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve in the proclamation on the family, where they state, "Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose."¹ From that statement we are taught that every girl was feminine and female in spirit long before her mortal birth.

God sent women to earth with some qualities in extra capacity. In speaking to young women, President Faust observed that femininity "is the divine adornment of humanity. It finds expression in your . . . capacity to love, your spirituality, delicacy, radiance, sensitivity, creativity, charm, graciousness, gentleness, dignity, and quiet strength. It is manifest differently in each girl or woman, but each . . . possesses it. Femininity is part of your inner beauty."²

Care for outward appearance

Our outward appearance is a reflection of what we are on the inside. Our lives reflect that for which we seek. And if with all our hearts we truly seek to know the Savior and to be more like Him, we shall be, for He is our divine, eternal Brother. But He is more than that. He is

our precious Savior, our dear Redeemer. We ask with Alma of old, "Have ye received his image in your countenances?" (Alma 5:14).

You can recognize women who are grateful to be daughters of God by their outward appearance. These women understand their stewardship over their bodies and treat them with dignity. They care for their bodies as they would a holy temple, for they understand Paul's teaching, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Women who love God would never abuse or deface a temple with graffiti. Nor would they throw open the doors of that holy, dedicated edifice and invite the world to look on. How even more sacred is the body, for it was not made by man. It was formed by God. We are the stewards, the keepers of the cleanliness and purity with which it came from heaven. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:17).

Grateful daughters of God guard their bodies carefully, for they know they are the wellspring of life and they reverence life. They don't uncover their bodies to find favor with the world. They walk in modesty to be in favor with their Father in Heaven, for they know He loves them dearly.

Minister to others

You can recognize women who are grateful to be daughters of God by their attitude. They know that the errand of angels is given to women, and they desire to be on God's errand to love His children and minister to them, to teach them the doctrines of salvation, to call them to repentance, to save them in perilous circumstances, to guide them in the performance of His work, to deliver His messages.³ They understand that they can bless their Father's children in their homes

and neighborhoods and beyond. Women who are grateful to be daughters of God bring glory to His name.

Magnify gifts

You can recognize women who are grateful to be daughters of God by their abilities. They fulfill their divine potential and magnify their God-given gifts. They are capable, strong women who bless families, serve others, and understand that "the glory of God is intelligence" (D&C 93:36). They are women who embrace enduring virtues in order to be all that our Father needs them to be. The prophet Jacob spoke of some of those virtues when he said their "feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God, which thing is pleasing unto God" (Jacob 2:7).

Reverence motherhood

You can recognize women who are grateful to be daughters of God by their reverence for motherhood, even when that blessing has been withheld from them for a time. In those circumstances, their righteous influence can be a blessing in the lives of children they love. Their exemplary teachings can echo the voice of a faithful home and resonate truth in the hearts of children who need another witness.

Grateful daughters of God love Him and teach their children to love Him without reservation and without resentment. They are like the mothers of Helaman's youthful army, who had such great faith and "had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them" (Alma 56:47).

When you observe kind and gentle mothers in action, you see women of great strength. Their families can feel a spirit of love and respect and safety when they are near her as she seeks the companionship of the Holy Ghost and the guidance of His Spirit. They are blessed

by her wisdom and good judgment. The husbands and children whose lives they bless will contribute to the stability of societies all over this world. Grateful daughters of God learn truths from their mothers and grandmothers and aunts. They teach their daughters the joyful art of creating a home. They seek fine educations for their children and have a thirst for knowledge themselves. They help their children develop skills that they can use in serving others. They know that the way they have chosen is not the easy way, but they know it is absolutely worth their finest efforts.

They understand what Elder Neal A. Maxwell meant when he said: "When the real history of mankind is fully disclosed, will it feature the echoes of gunfire or the shaping sound of lullabies? The great armistices made by military men or the peacemaking of women in homes and in neighborhoods? Will what happened in cradles and kitchens prove to be more controlling than what happened in congresses?"⁴

Daughters of God know that it is the nurturing nature of women that can bring everlasting blessings, and they live to cultivate this divine attribute. Surely when a woman reverences motherhood, her children will arise up and call her blessed (see Proverbs 31:28).

Not like women of the world

Women of God can never be like the women of the world. The world has enough women who are tough; we need women who are tender. There are enough women who are coarse; we need women who are kind. There are enough women who are rude; we need women who are refined. We have enough women of fame and fortune; we need more women of faith. We have enough greed; we need more goodness. We have enough vanity; we need more virtue. We have enough popularity; we need more purity.

Oh, how we pray that every young woman will grow up to be all the wonderful things she is meant to be. We pray that her mother and father will show her the right way. May daughters of God honor the priesthood and sustain worthy priesthood holders. May they understand their own great capacity for strength in the timeless virtues that some would scoff at in a modern, liberated world for women.

Understand and nourish potential

May mothers and fathers understand the great potential for good their daughters inherited from their heavenly home. We must nourish their gentleness, their nurturing nature, their innate spirituality and sensitivity, and their bright minds. Celebrate the fact that girls are different from boys. Be thankful for the position they have in God's grand plan. And always remember what President Hinckley said: "Only after the earth had been formed, after the day had been separated from the night, after the waters had been divided from the land, after vegetation and animal life had been cre-

ated, and after man had been placed on the earth, was woman created; and only then was the work pronounced complete and good."⁵

Fathers, husbands, young men, may you catch a vision of all that women are and can be. Please be worthy of God's holy priesthood, which you bear, and honor that priesthood, for it blesses all of us.

Sisters, regardless of your age, please understand all that you are and must be, all that you were prepared to be in royal courts on high by God Himself. May we use with gratitude the priceless gifts we have been given for the lifting of mankind to higher thinking and nobler aspirations, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
2. "Womanhood: The Highest Place of Honor," *Ensign*, May 2000, 96.
3. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 35.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 14; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 10–11.
5. "Our Responsibility to Our Young Women," *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 11.

Elder Russell M. Nelson

Guidance for our mortal journey

Recently Sister Nelson and I were in Denmark during the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Church in Scandinavia. Between meetings, we took a few hours to search for villages where two of my father's grandparents were born. They were among the early converts to the Church in Denmark. Father's paternal grandmother's family lived in the western part of the country.¹ His paternal grandfather's family lived in northern Denmark.² Thanks to a good driver and a superb map, we found each town on our list and obtained treasured information. During the entire journey, my

hands were riveted to that valuable map so essential to achieve our goals.

In contrast, many people travel through life without good guidance, lacking knowledge of a desired destination or how to get there. But if rapt attention is paid to a road map for a day's journey, isn't it also wise to pay attention to authoritative guidance on our journey through life? To this end I would like to speak—on *why* we need guidance, *where* we obtain it, and *how* we can achieve it.

Why we need guidance

The question *why* focuses on the purpose of life. The ultimate objective in our

mortal journey has been revealed by our Creator, who said, "If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God."³

His gift of eternal life is subject to conditions established by Him.⁴ Those conditions constitute a plan or, to use my analogy, a spiritual road map. And when trouble comes, guidance is needed most. In our journey in Denmark, we met an unexpected detour that led us astray. In order to get back on course, we stopped the car. We studied the map with great care. Then we made the necessary course correction.

What if you are lost and have no map? Suppose you are alone. You do not know where you are. What can you do? You call for help! You call home! Call the Church! Pray! When connected with your help line, you learn that you need to make a climb here or a turn there to get back on course. Or you may have to go back to the beginning in order to be certain that you can get where you want to go.

Where we obtain guidance

That brings us to the question of *where* do we obtain the guidance we need. We turn to Him who knows us best—our Creator. He allowed us to come to earth with freedom to choose our own course. In His great love, He did not leave us alone. He provided a guide—a spiritual road map—to help us achieve success in our journey. We call that guide the standard works, so named because they—the Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price—constitute the *standard* by which we should live. They serve as a standard of reference, as are standards of time, weights, and measures that are kept in national bureaus of standards.

To reach our objective of eternal life, we need to follow teachings in the standard works and other revelations received

from prophets of God.⁵ Our loving Lord foresaw our need for guidance: "For strait is the gate," He said, "and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it."⁶

Few find the way, because they ignore the divine road map provided by the Lord. An even more serious mistake is to ignore the Maker of the map. God declared in the first of His Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."⁷ Yet carnal man tends to let his loyalty drift toward idols.

For example, we marvel at computers and the Internet, which enable transmission of data with remarkable speed. We are truly grateful for these electronic servants. But if we let them take over our time, pervert our potential, or poison our minds with pornography, they cease being servants and become instead false gods.

The Master warned of those who "seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol."⁸

False gods can only lead to dead ends. If our journey through life is to be successful, we need to follow divine direction. The Lord said, "Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not."⁹ And the Psalmist wrote, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."¹⁰

Following such counsel demands not only conviction but conversion and often repentance. That would please the Lord, who said, "Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn . . . from all your abominations."¹¹

In your journey through life, you meet many obstacles and make some mistakes. Scriptural guidance helps you to recognize error and make the necessary correction. You stop going in the wrong

direction. You carefully study the scriptural road map. Then you proceed with repentance and restitution required to get on the "strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life."¹²

Brothers and sisters, our busy lives force us to focus on things we *do* from day to day. But the development of character comes only as we focus on who we really *are*. To establish and accomplish those greater goals, we do need heavenly help.

How we can achieve scriptural guidance

Once we understand *why* we need guidance and *where* we obtain it, we then ask, *how* can we achieve it? How can we truly live, not "by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God?"¹³

Make the scriptures part of our nature

We begin with a determination to "liken all scriptures unto us . . . for our profit and learning."¹⁴ If we "press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, . . . [we] shall have eternal life."¹⁵

To feast means more than to taste. To feast means to savor. We savor the scriptures by studying them in a spirit of delightful discovery and faithful obedience.¹⁶ When we feast upon the words of Christ, they are embedded "in fleshy tables of the heart."¹⁷ They become an integral part of our nature.

Many years ago a medical colleague chastised me for failing to separate my professional knowledge from my religious convictions. That startled me because I did not feel that truth should be fractionalized. Truth is indivisible.

Danger lurks when we divide ourselves with expressions such as "my private life," "my professional life," or even "my best behavior." Living life in separate compartments can lead to internal conflict and exhausting tension. To es-

cape that tension, many people unwisely resort to addicting substances, pleasure seeking, or self-indulgence, which in turn produces more tension, thus creating a vicious cycle.

Inner peace comes only as we maintain the integrity of truth in all aspects of our lives. When we covenant to follow the Lord and obey His commandments, we accept His standards in *every* thought, action, and deed.

Cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost

Living the Lord's standards requires that we cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost. That gift helps us understand doctrine and apply it personally. Because truth that is given by revelation can be understood only by revelation,¹⁸ our studies need to be prayerful. Scriptures attest to the efficacy of prayer in daily life. One is in Proverbs: "In all thy ways acknowledge [God], and he shall direct thy paths."¹⁹ Another comes from the Book of Mormon: "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good."²⁰

As you ponder and pray about doctrinal principles, the Holy Ghost will speak to your mind and your heart.²¹ From events portrayed in the scriptures, new insights will come and principles relevant to your situation will distill upon your heart.

You cultivate such revelatory experiences by living according to the light already given you and by searching the scriptures with pure motives—with real intent to "come unto Christ."²² As you do so, your confidence will "wax strong in the presence of God," and the Holy Ghost will be your constant companion.²³

Ask pertinent questions

Achieving scriptural guidance is aided by posing pertinent questions.²⁴ You might ask, "What principle can be learned from these teachings of the Lord?" For

example, scriptures teach that the Creation was accomplished in six periods of time.²⁵ Principles learned from that study show that any great attainment requires proper planning, timing, patience, labor, and no shortcuts.

Choose a style of study

Next, I suggest that you shape the style of your study to fit you.²⁶ One way is to read a book of scripture from the first page to the last. This method gives good overall perspective. But other approaches also have merit. Attention to a particular topic or a specific theme, supplemented by use of cross-referencing footnotes and study guides, can help to switch on the light of doctrinal understanding.

Guidance can come when grappling with a serious challenge in life. Years ago, in the days of my early scientific research in a field that was then new to medical practice, a scriptural standard of truth gave me the courage needed to persevere. I leaned heavily upon these verses in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"All kingdoms have a law given;

"And there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space. . . .

"And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions."²⁷

We learned laws that pertained to the "kingdom" of our concern and mastered control that had previously been relegated by ignorance to chance alone.

Motivation for scriptural guidance comes when important choices must be made—even between options that are equally right. The Brethren are often faced with these kinds of decisions. On such an occasion we turn to the scriptures. We may read all of the standard works afresh, looking for insights relative to a specific issue.

Establish a time for study

Time for scripture study requires a schedule that will be honored. Otherwise, blessings that matter most will be at the mercy of things that matter least. Time for *family* scripture study may be difficult to establish. Years ago when our children were at home, they attended different grades in several schools. Their daddy had to be at the hospital no later than 7:00 in the morning. In family council we determined that our best time for scripture study was 6:00 A.M. At that hour our little ones were very sleepy but supportive. Occasionally we had to awaken one when a turn came to read. I would be less than honest with you if I conveyed the impression that our family scripture time was a howling success. Occasionally it was more howling than successful. But we did not give up.

Now, a generation later, our children are all married with families of their own. Sister Nelson and I have watched them enjoy family scripture study in their own homes. Their efforts are much more successful than were ours. We shudder to think what might have happened if we had quit trying.²⁸

We all *need* guidance through life. We *obtain* it best from the standard works and teachings of the prophets of God. With diligent effort, we can *achieve* that guidance and thus qualify for all of the blessings that God has in store for His faithful children. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Gørding, Vejrup, and Vester Nebel, in Ribe County.
2. Mølholm, Støre Brøndum, in Ålborg County.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:21.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 132:22.
7. Exodus 20:3.

8. Doctrine and Covenants 1:16.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.
10. Psalm 119:105.
11. Ezekiel 14:6.
12. 2 Nephi 31:18; see also Matthew 7:14; Jacob 6:11; 3 Nephi 14:14; 27:33; Doctrine and Covenants 132:22.
13. Matthew 4:4.
14. 1 Nephi 19:23.
15. 2 Nephi 31:20.
16. Scriptures give encouragement to live in accord with the will of our Maker, who said, "If thou turn away . . . from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, . . . and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, . . . then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord" (Isaiah 58:13-14). Self-esteem is also earned by obedience to God's commandments regarding chastity (see Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:22; Matthew 5:28; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 3 Nephi 12:28; Doctrine and Covenants 42:24; 59:6).
17. 2 Corinthians 3:3.
18. See 1 Corinthians 2:11-14.
19. Proverbs 3:6.
20. Alma 37:37.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
22. Jacob 1:7; Omni 1:26; Moroni 10:30, 32.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45; see also verse 46.
24. As any good thing can be misused, a word of warning may be appropriate. The scriptures don't have the answers to every question. Many important truths have yet to be revealed. Preoccupation with the so-called "mysteries" should be avoided. Beware also of private interpretation. Look to the living prophets and official policies for interpretation. Don't judge others whose circumstances are not yours to judge. We are reassured, however, that they who "diligently [seek] shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Nephi 10:19). Keep in mind too that many revelations have

been given in response to prophetic inquiry.

It is interesting to note that the first and last books of the Old Testament pose important questions: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9) and "Will a man rob God?" (Malachi 3:8).

25. See Exodus 20:11; 31:17; Mosiah 13:19; Doctrine and Covenants 77:12; Abraham 4:31.
26. In your personal scripture study, you may wish to correlate your reading with a Church-outlined course of study, such as the Gospel Doctrine curriculum. Some like to prepare memorization cards that they can use while waiting for appointments or meetings.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 88:36-38.
28. Personal and family scripture study can employ books, recordings, or other material. Those who will establish a time for scripture study and endure in that endeavor will maintain a positive spirit throughout their days.

The choir sang "Oh, What Songs of the Heart."

President Hinckley

Sister Margaret D. Nadauld, Young Women general president, has just spoken to us and I think has reminded all of us of the tremendous strength we have in the great women of this Church. She was followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The choir then sang "Oh, What Songs of the Heart."

Now, brothers and sisters, there are very many of us here this morning, more than 20,000 in this great hall. Please, when you leave, be careful. Obey traffic rules. Be cautious. Be courteous in your driving. We don't wish any sad event to mar the spirit of this beautiful gathering.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided.

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "I Believe in Christ." The benediction will

then be offered by Elder Earl M. Monson of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

Elder David B. Haight

When President Gordon B. Hinckley announced that I would be the concluding speaker, I'm sure he was wondering if I could make it to the pulpit all right. He knows that I've just had my 94th birthday. So I'm in my 95th year, and he would be wondering.

He also knows that my eyesight isn't very good, but as my eyesight dims somewhat, I think my vision improves—my vision of the long road, my vision of what lies ahead. And so with all of you here this morning, I am sure you would join with me in saying what a marvelous time to be alive and what a marvelous time to be a member of this Church and how wonderful it is to have the freedoms that we have—the freedom of assembly and of religious gathering.

The gospel makes a difference

When Ruby and I knelt in the Salt Lake Temple at the altar on September 4, 1930, holding hands and looking at one another, little did we realize what was ahead for us. We were two young people. I had come out of the country in southern Idaho, and Ruby had come out of Sanpete County, Utah. Our fathers were dead, but we had two wonderful widowed mothers, and they were with us in the temple. As we knelt and made covenants and promises, I knew that that was for real.

Now, after we have been married 70 years, I can say to all of you that it gets better, that it gets better year after year, with the preciousness and the tenderness and the realization of some of the eter-

nal blessings that lie ahead for us. And so to all of you I would say, and Ruby would join with me if she could be standing here, that life can be wonderful and so meaningful, but we have to live it in a simple way. We must live the principles of the gospel. For it is the gospel in our lives that makes the difference as we wend our way through life.

I have moved our family all over the country. Our children have grown up being in school when they were the only members of the Church in their class. We've done that many times, but that added to their development and their understanding and helped in the development of their testimonies to see the world in action but also to see the blessings of the gospel in our lives.

Blessing of a precious little baby

Last Sunday, Ruby and I attended a sacrament meeting of a ward here in central Salt Lake. The meeting was most interesting because in that ward there is some affluence as well as people who are living in halfway houses. Just before the testimony meeting, a young lady walked up to the bishop on the stand, holding a little baby in her arms, wanting the baby to receive a blessing. The bishop stepped down and took the little baby, and the baby was blessed.

Later on during the testimony meeting, a little seven-year-old boy, with his five-year-old sister by the hand, walked up to the pulpit. He helped fix a little stool there for her to stand on, his five-year-old sister, and he helped her as she

bore her testimony. And as she would falter just a little, he would lean over and whisper in her ear, this little loving seven-year-old brother.

After she finished, he stood on the stool, and she stood watching him, and he bore his testimony. She had that sweet expression on her face as she watched him. He was her older brother, but you could see that family love and relationship with those two little children. He stepped down from the stool, took her by the hand, and they walked back down to take their seat.

Near the end of the testimony meeting, when there were a few moments for me to speak, I asked the young lady who had brought her child up to be blessed if she would come up and stand by me, which she did. In the meantime, while the meeting was going on, I asked the bishop, whispering into his ear, "Where is her husband?"

The bishop said, "He's in jail."

I asked, "What is her name?" and he told me her name.

She came up and stood by my side, carrying the little baby. As we were standing at the pulpit, I looked down at this little precious baby, only a few days old, and this mother—the mother of that little daughter, who had brought her to receive a blessing at the hands of the priesthood. As I looked at the mother and looked at that precious little child, I wondered what she might become or what she could be.

Family proclamation guides us

I spoke to the audience and to this young mother about the proclamation that was issued five years ago by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve—a proclamation on the family—and of our responsibility to our children, and the children's responsibility to their parents, and the parents' responsibility to each other. That marvelous document brings

together the scriptural direction that we have received that has guided the lives of God's children from the time of Adam and Eve and will continue to guide us until the final winding-up scene.

As we talked about it and as I looked at that beautiful little baby, I thought of last summer. Ruby and I were up in Idaho for a short visit, and we met some people from Mountain Home, Idaho—the Goodrich family. Sister Goodrich had come to see us and had brought her daughter Chelsea with her. In part of the conversation that we were having, Sister Goodrich said Chelsea had memorized the proclamation on the family.

To Chelsea, who is now 15 years old, I said, "Chelsea, is that right?"

She said, "Yes."

I said, "How long did it take you to do that?"

She said, "When we were young, my mother started a program in our house to help us memorize. We would memorize scripture passages and sacrament meeting songs and other types of things that would be helpful to us. So we learned how to memorize, and it became easier for us."

I said, "Then you can give it all?"

She said, "Yes, I can give it all."

I said, "You learned that when you were 12 years old; you're now 15. Pretty soon you'll start dating. Tell me about it. What has it done for you?"

Chelsea said, "As I think of the statements in that proclamation, and as I understand more of our responsibility as a family and our responsibility for the way we live and the way we should conduct our lives, the proclamation becomes a new guideline for me. As I associate with other people and when I start dating, I can think of those phrases and those sentences in the proclamation on the family. It will give me a yardstick which will help guide me. It will give me the strength that I need."

Be a strong link

A short time ago President Hinckley was speaking to the students at the Brigham Young University. He made the statement that life is a great chain of generations, link following link, until the end of time. In talking to the students, he encouraged them not to be a weak link but to be a strong link in their family.

We've heard a lot of instruction here this morning in the conference regarding family history and families, the reason for linkage, and the responsibility that we have to do temple work for tens of thousands of people who could be a part of our own families waiting on the other side to receive the ordinances that must be done on this side of the veil so that they can carry on with what needs to be done on the other side. This we all understand so well.

So I would say to all of you here this morning, I hope you could develop a strong feeling in your own families—and with you personally—about not wanting to become a weak link in the chain of your family and of your ancestors. I encourage you also to be a strong link for your posterity. Do not be the weak link. Wouldn't that be a terrible thing to do? To think of that long chain and of all the precious work that needs to be done in the saving of souls, wouldn't it be sad if you were the one who was the weak link that caused your descendants not to be able to be part of that strong linkage.

Anxiety to do temple work in Nauvoo

When the Saints were preparing to leave Nauvoo, and with the Nauvoo Temple unfinished, it was possible for them to endow only a few people. President Brigham Young, as President of the Quorum of the Twelve, was the senior Apostle at that time. He wrote in his journal about the anxiety that the people felt when they were trying to get their wagons equipped to start the trek west into that new area

they knew nothing of. They were following their leaders, getting ready the few possessions they could take with them on the wagons.

Amidst all these preparations, there was an opportunity for some of them to be endowed, and the people were anxious to be endowed. Brigham Young stopped doing all of the regular, routine work he was doing. He put that to one side so that he could stay in the temple and conduct the endowment work that was so necessary. In commenting about the experience, he said he was anxious to do what the Saints were anxious to have done. That word, *anxiety*, is interesting as it appears in his account. He writes of the anxiety that they had, hoping that the important endowment work could be accomplished before the people left on the trek west.

Strengthen family links

I leave you my love and my witness and the knowledge that I have that this work is true. I know that God lives. I know that He loves us. He loves us, just as we love our children and our posterity. We now have 65 great-grandchildren, and of course we'll have more on their way. We love them all, and we hope that the chains and the links in our family will be strong and that our children will be blessed. We're proud of all of them and pray that they will grow up with the strong knowledge and the feeling that I have regarding God—that He lives, that He's our Father, and that all of this work is under His direction, that of His Son, who is our Savior, Jesus the Christ. This is the Church of Jesus Christ, restored to the earth in these latter days. I know it is true.

Marvelous happenings in the Church

I know that we have a living prophet upon the earth today, and you can see the marvelous things that are happening

in the Church now with 100 operating temples. Some of you here will live to see the day when there are 200 operating temples and then 300 operating temples, and whatever the number might eventually become.

Well, we're living at this time and this day and age when marvelous things are happening. When we talk about a living prophet who receives revelations from on high in directing this work, I testify to you that those of us who work and associate with him can testify that he is God's prophet here upon the earth,

leading us in doing what is right and what is proper.

May your links be strong. May you personally find the great joy and happiness that can be ours through living the principles of the gospel. I leave you my love and this witness that the Church is true, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "I Believe in Christ."

Elder Earl M. Monson offered the benediction.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second general session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center on Saturday, October 7, 2000, at 2:00 P.M. President Thomas S. Monson conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined Missionary Training Center choir. Douglas Brenchley directed the choir. Linda Margetts was the organist.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President Thomas S. Monson

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Monson, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or who are participating by means of television, cable, radio, or the Internet, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by a combined Missionary Train-

ing Center choir, under the direction of Douglas Brenchley, with Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will open these services by singing "We Will Sing of Zion." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Ben B. Banks of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang "We Will Sing of Zion."

Elder Ben B. Banks offered the invocation.

President Monson

The choir will now sing "Hark, All Ye Nations!" President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

Following President Faust, Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will address us.

The choir sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

The Sustaining of Church Officers

President James E. Faust

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor, please manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of appreciation to Elders Loren C. Dunn, F. Enzo Busche, and Alexander B. Morrison and designate them as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest it.

With gratitude for their service as members of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, we extend an honorable release to Elders Eran A. Call, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, and Richard E. Turley

Sr. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation, please indicate by the uplifted hand.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elder Harold G. Hillam as a President of the Quorums of the Seventy and Elders Harold G. Hillam, Neil L. Andersen, and John H. Groberg as the Sunday School general presidency. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation to all for their services, please make it known.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander as a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we release Elders Hugo A. Catrón, Ambrosio C. Collado, Gordon G. Conger, Cláudio Cuéllar, Paul L. Diehl, Donald B. Doty, Alvie R. Evans Sr., Eduardo Gavarret, Salomón Jaar, W. E. Barry Mayo, Mitchell V. Myers, Stein Pedersen, Gustavo Ramos, Eugene E. Reid, Alejandro M. Robles, Servando Rojas, Lynn A. Rosenvall, L. Douglas Smoot, Brian A. Watling, and Carlos D. Vargas as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it.

It is proposed that we sustain Tsung Ting Yang and Aleksandr N. Manzhos as Area Authority Seventies. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders Marlin K. Jensen, Neil L. Andersen, and John H. Groberg as the Sunday School general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and prayers.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Importance of individual testimonies

Once again we gather in this wondrous Conference Center and in many other places throughout the world. During this conference we will hear and have heard the testimonies of many servants of the Lord. Concerning testimony, the Psalmist wrote, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure."¹

For Latter-day Saints, a testimony is "the assurance of the reality, truth, and goodness of God, of the teachings and atonement of Jesus Christ, and of the divine calling of latter-day prophets. . . . It is knowledge buttressed by divine personal confirmation by the Holy Ghost."²

Expressions of solemn testimony have long been important to the children of God upon the earth. Individual testimonies have strengthened this Church from its earliest days.

Story of John Taylor's conversion

One evening in April 1836, for example, Elder Parley P. Pratt had retired early with pressing worries and a heavy heart. He didn't know how he was going to meet his financial obligations. His wife had been seriously ill, and his aged mother had come to live with him. A year earlier the house he had been building had gone up in flames.

While he was deep in thought, a knock came at the door. Elder Heber C. Kimball entered and, filled with the spirit of prophecy, told Elder Pratt that he should travel to Toronto, Canada, where he would "find a people prepared for the fulness of the gospel" and that "many [would] be brought to the knowledge of the truth."³

Despite his worries, Elder Pratt departed. When he arrived in Toronto, at

first no one seemed interested in hearing what he had to say.

Among those he met was John Taylor, who had been a Methodist preacher. John received Elder Pratt courteously but coolly. John Taylor had heard distorted rumors about a new sect, their "golden bible," and stories of angels appearing to an "unlearned youth, reared in the backwoods of New York."⁴

A wise man, John Taylor had been seeking the truth all his life. He listened to what Elder Pratt had to say. Among other things, the stranger from America promised that anyone who investigated the gospel could know for himself, through the influence of the Holy Ghost, that it was true. At one point John Taylor asked: "What do you mean by this Holy Ghost? . . . [Will it give] a certain knowledge of the principles that you believe in?"

The Apostle replied, "Yes, . . . and if it will not, then I am an impostor."⁵

Hearing this, John Taylor took up the challenge, saying, "If I find his religion true, I shall accept it, no matter what the consequences may be; and if false, then I shall expose it."⁶

Not only did he accept the challenge, but he "received that Spirit through obedience to the Gospel."⁷ Soon he knew for himself what millions of others have since known—that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth.

Eventually this man who had devoted his entire life to seeking the truth became the third President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Holy Ghost will confirm truth to all

Over time, much in the world has changed. One thing, however, remains the same: the promise Elder Parley P. Pratt made to John Taylor 164 years ago is just as valid today as it was then—the

Holy Ghost will confirm the truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Logic itself affirms that a loving Heavenly Father would not abandon His children without providing a way for them to learn of Him. One of the great messages of the Restoration is that the windows of heaven are open. All who seek to know the truth may, through revelations of the Spirit, know for themselves.

We are blessed to live in an age when apostles and prophets walk the earth bearing solemn and certain testimony that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Many members—millions strong—add their voices to the growing chorus testifying that God once again has spoken to man.

President Joseph F. Smith declared: "Every person should know that the gospel is true, as this is everyone's privilege who is baptized and receives the Holy Ghost. . . . I know that the gospel is true, and that God is with his people; and that if I will do my duty and keep his commandments, the clouds will roll by, and the mists will disappear."⁸

How to acquire a testimony

How does one acquire a personal testimony?

Study the words of Moroni. He lived more than 1,500 years ago. This prophet had watched as his people were slaughtered and utterly devastated by civil war—his nation in ruins; his friends and loved ones slain; his own father, a great general and a righteous man, killed.

This great prophet, Moroni, having lost all that he loved, stood alone. The last of his people, he was the lone witness to the desolation and heartbreak that result from hatred and rage.

He had precious little time and space on his plates to write a few final words. His own people destroyed, Moroni wrote for our day. To us he inscribed his precious words of farewell—his final words of counsel:

"Behold, I would exhort you," he wrote, "that when ye shall read these things, . . . ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men. . . . Ponder it in your hearts.

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost."⁹

Would that every ear could hear the last testimony of Moroni, this giant among men, this humble servant of God.

Do you want to know the truth of the holy scriptures? Do you wish to break the barriers that separate mortals from the knowledge of eternal verities? Do you wish to know—really know—the truth? Then follow Moroni's counsel and you will surely find what you seek.

Be sincere. Study. Ponder. Pray sincerely, having faith.

If you do these things, you too will be able to stand with the millions who testify that God once again speaks to man on earth.

Continue until you receive a testimony

A testimony of the truth of the gospel does not come the same way to all people. Some receive it in a unique, life-changing experience. Others gain a testimony slowly, almost imperceptibly, until one day they simply know.

Study the words of President David O. McKay, who tells of how, in his youth, he knelt and "prayed fervently and sincerely and with as much faith as a young boy could muster" that "God would declare to [him] the truth of his revelation to Joseph Smith."

President McKay related that when he arose from his knees, he had to admit that "no spiritual manifestation has come to me. If I am true to myself, I must say

I am just the same [boy] that I was before I prayed.”¹⁰

I don’t know how young David felt in his heart at that time, but I’m sure he must have been disappointed—perhaps frustrated that he didn’t receive the spiritual experience that he had hoped for. But that didn’t discourage him from continuing his search for that knowledge.

The answer to his prayers did come, but not until years later when he was serving as a missionary. Why was the answer to his prayer so long delayed? President McKay believed that this spiritual manifestation “came as a natural sequence to the performance of duty.”¹¹

The Savior taught a similar principle. When the truth of His message was challenged, He declared, “If any man will *do* [God’s] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”¹²

Don’t be discouraged if the answer to your prayer does not come immediately. Study, ponder, and pray, sincerely having faith, and live the commandments.

“Dispute not because ye see not,” Moroni taught, “for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.”¹³

Importance of bearing our testimonies

I remember as a child listening to the testimonies given by adults in my ward. Those testimonies entered my heart and inspired my soul. Wherever I go throughout the world—no matter the language, no matter the culture—I thrill to hear the testimonies of the Saints.

Recently I received a letter from our grandson who is a missionary. He wrote that members “who are reading scriptures and praying are more willing to share the gospel.”¹⁴

I believe he’s right. The more we study the scriptures and pray, the more likely we can enthusiastically share our testimonies of the gospel with others.

Remember, Church members who receive a testimony of the gospel are under covenant “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places.”¹⁵ It is clear that we have a sacred obligation to obtain referrals for our missionaries. Witnesses have a special knowledge and are to bear testimony of “that which they have seen and heard and most assuredly believe.”¹⁶

We make simple, clear, direct statements that we know with certainty and surety that the gospel is true because it has been “made known unto [us] by the Holy Spirit of God.”¹⁷ In bearing such a testimony, speaking by the power of the Holy Ghost, we are promised that “the Holy Ghost shall be shed forth in bearing record unto all things whatsoever [we] shall say.”¹⁸ We are blessed personally when we so testify.

President Boyd K. Packer said:

“A testimony is to be *found* in the *bearing* of it. Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that ‘leap of faith,’ as the philosophers call it. It is the moment when you have gone to the edge of the light and step into the darkness to discover that the way is lighted ahead for just a footstep or two.”¹⁹

Making a determined and confident public statement of your belief is such a step into the unknown. It has a powerful effect in strengthening your own convictions. Bearing testimony drives your faith deeper into your soul, and you believe more fervently than before.

To those who faithfully bear testimony, the Lord said, “Ye are blessed, for the testimony which ye have borne is recorded in heaven for the angels to look upon; and they rejoice over you, and your sins are forgiven you.”²⁰ I have tried to follow this counsel to bear testimony.

How I gained a testimony

May I tell you how I gained a testimony of the truth and divine nature of

this great latter-day work? I'm afraid my experience isn't very dramatic. It is not a story of heavenly hosannas or thundering shouts. It is not a story of lightning, fire, or flood.

But I have always known the reality and goodness of God.

From my earliest memories it was there—a sure and abiding testimony of this great work. Sometimes that assurance comes when we feel the love of the Savior when we meet His servants. I remember when I was just five years old and my family moved into a new ward. That first Sunday, Bishop Charles E. Forsberg, who was born in Sweden, came up to me and called me by name. I knew then.

During the cold and gray days of the Great Depression, I remember a wonderful servant of the Savior by the name of C. Perry Erickson. Brother Erickson, a contractor, had a difficult time finding work. He could have shut himself up. He could have become bitter and angry. He could have given up. Instead, when I was 12 he was my Scoutmaster. He spent countless hours helping me and others my age to learn, to grow, and to approach every difficulty with confidence and optimism. Without exception, every one of C. Perry Erickson's Scouts received an Eagle award. I knew then.

Yes, the testimonies of priesthood leaders and faithful ward members helped me to know.

I remember the words of my mother and father. I remember their expressions of faith and love for their Heavenly Father. I knew then.

I knew the reality of the Savior's compassion when, at the request of my father, the bishop of the ward, I delivered food and clothing to the widows and poor of the ward.

I knew when, as young parents, my wife and I gathered our children around us and expressed our gratitude to our Heavenly Father for our many blessings.

I knew last April, when I heard from this pulpit the words of our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who called Jesus his friend, exemplar, leader, Savior, and King.

President Hinckley said:

"Through giving His life in pain and unspeakable suffering, He has reached down to lift me and each of us and all the sons and daughters of God from the abyss of eternal darkness following death. He has provided something better—a sphere of light and understanding, growth and beauty."²¹

If you seek the Lord, you will find Him

Now I would like to bear my testimony. I know that Joseph Smith saw what he said he saw, that the heavens opened and God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to an unlearned youth reared in the backwoods of New York.

As a special witness of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world, I promise you that if you seek the Lord, you will find Him. Ask, and you shall receive.

I pray that you may do so and testify to the ends of the earth that the gospel of our Lord and Savior is restored to man! In the name of my friend, my exemplar, my Savior and King, Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Psalm 19:7.
2. In Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 5 vols. (1992), 4:1470.
3. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (1985), 110.
4. B. H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor* (1963), 34.
5. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 18 Apr. 1882.
6. *The Life of John Taylor*, 38.
7. *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 18 Apr. 1882.
8. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 43.
9. Moroni 10:3–4.

10. *Cherished Experiences from the Writings of President David O. McKay*, comp. Clare Middlemiss (1955), 16.
11. *Cherished Experiences*, 16.
12. John 7:17; italics added.
13. Ether 12:6.
14. Letter from Elder Andrew Cannon, 30 Aug. 2000.
15. Mosiah 18:9.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 52:36.
17. Alma 5:46.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 100:8.
19. "That All May Be Edified" (1982), 340.

20. Doctrine and Covenants 62:3.
21. In Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 88; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 71.

President Monson

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and he will be followed by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy.

Elder Richard G. Scott

Repentance—the path to peace and joy

There is an essential aspect of the plan of happiness of our Father in Heaven that is often ignored even though it invariably yields peace and joy. The Savior gave His life that it might be used to bless every child of Father in Heaven. This subject is widely misunderstood and often feared. Some feel that it is to be employed only by those in serious transgression, while the Lord intended that it be consistently used by every one of His children. He has repeatedly commanded His prophets and leaders to proclaim it and to speak of little else.¹ I refer to the blessing of true, sincere, continuing repentance, the path to peace and joy. It is a conduit to the reforming power of the Lord and, when understood and used, a dear and precious friend.

We are commanded to repent

Repentance is not optional. An angel commanded Adam to "repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore."² Each one of us is commanded both to repent and to call upon God continually throughout life. That pattern allows each day to be an unspoiled page in the book of life—a new,

fresh opportunity. We are given the rejuvenating privilege of overcoming mistakes of commission or omission, be they small or profoundly serious. Full repentance results in forgiveness with spiritual renewal. One can feel the cleansing, the purity, the freshness that accompanies sincere repentance at any time in life.

The Savior has made the requirement clear: "I command you to repent, and keep the commandments . . . lest I humble you with my almighty power."³

Likewise Jacob taught with crystal clarity:

"[The Holy One of Israel] cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; . . .

"And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God."⁴

The redeeming power of repentance

Why have our Father and His Son commanded us to repent? Because they love us. They know all of us will violate eternal laws. Whether they be small or large, justice requires that every broken law be satisfied to retain the promise of joy in this life and the privilege of re-

turning to Father in Heaven. If not satisfied, in the Day of Judgment justice will cause that we be cast out of the presence of God to be under the control of Satan.⁵

It is our Master and His redeeming act that make it possible for us to avoid such condemnation. It is done through faith in Jesus Christ, obedience to His commandments, and enduring in righteousness to the end.

Are you taking full advantage of the redeeming power of repentance in your life so that you can have greater peace and joy? Feelings of turmoil and despondency often signal a need for repentance. Also, the lack of the spiritual direction you seek in your life could result from broken laws. If needed, full repentance will put your life together. It will solve all of the complex spiritual pains that come from transgression. But in this life it cannot remedy some of the physical consequences that can occur from serious sin. Be wise, and consistently live well within the boundaries of righteousness defined by the Lord.

Vital steps to repentance

There are several vital steps to repentance. Each is essential for complete forgiveness. President Joseph F. Smith identified some of these steps this way:

"True repentance is not only sorrow for sins, and humble penitence and contrition before God, but it involves the necessity of turning away from them, a discontinuance of all evil practices . . . a thorough reformation of life, a vital change from evil to good . . . to make restitution, so far as . . . possible, for all the wrongs we have done. . . . This is true repentance, and the exercise of the will and all the powers of [the] body and mind is demanded, to complete this glorious work of repentance."⁶

To the vital steps of recognition, sorrow, abandonment, confession, and restitution where possible, it is also essential

to add the requirement to diligently keep all of the commandments of God.⁷ For the Lord has declared:

"I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

"Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven."⁸

Great reinforcement and a sustaining power to succeed come when there is a determination to keep all of the commandments. The Lord expects a lifelong commitment to obey the plan of happiness, including continuing repentance as needed. He has said, "He only is saved who endureth unto the end."⁹

Repentance is centered in the Atonement

Formulas have been crafted to help us remember some of the essential actions required for full repentance. While these can be helpful, generally they ignore the most fundamental aspect of repentance—that it is centered in Jesus Christ and in His Atonement, that it has efficacy because He willingly paid the full price through His redeeming sacrifice, motivated by a perfect love of His Father and of each of us. Alma declared:

"I was three days and three nights in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins. But . . . I did cry unto him and I did find peace to my soul.

" . . . I have told you this that you may learn wisdom, that ye may learn . . . that there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ."¹⁰

Peace is the precious fruit of a righteous life. It is possible because of the Atonement of the Savior. It is earned through full repentance, for that leads to refreshing forgiveness. Repentance opens the doors of enlightenment and aids inspiration.¹¹ Repentance brings salvation through forgiveness,¹² but it does

not come automatically. Each step of repentance must be fulfilled.

A broken heart and a contrite spirit

To feel sorrow and be motivated to confess is a proper beginning, but it is not sufficient. When confession is voluntary, the action required for repentance is greatly simplified. It does no good for an individual to stonewall efforts of a judge in Israel to encourage repentance by denying that a real transgression has occurred or by being otherwise unyielding. Lehi taught, "He offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a *broken heart and a contrite spirit*; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered."¹³ There must be humility¹⁴ and sorrow.¹⁵

I suggest that you read President Spencer W. Kimball's inspired book *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. It continues to help the faithful avoid the pitfalls of serious transgression. It likewise is an excellent handbook for those who have committed serious errors and want to find their way back. Read the last two chapters first to appreciate the full miracle of forgiveness before reading anything else.

Full repentance brings forgiveness

If you have repented from serious transgression and mistakenly believe that you will always be a second-class citizen in the kingdom of God, learn that is not true. The Savior said:

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

"By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them."¹⁶

Find encouragement in the lives of Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah. They were tragically wicked. Yet

their full repentance and service qualified them to be considered as noble as righteous Captain Moroni.¹⁷

Guilt need not persist after repentance

To you who have sincerely repented yet continue to feel the burden of guilt, realize that to continue to suffer for sins when there has been proper repentance and forgiveness of the Lord is prompted by the master of deceit. Lucifer will encourage you to continue to relive the details of past mistakes, knowing that such thoughts can hamper your progress. Thus he attempts to tie strings to the mind and body so that he can manipulate you like a puppet to discourage personal achievement.

I testify that Jesus Christ paid the price and will satisfy the demands of justice for all who are obedient to His teachings. Thus, full forgiveness is granted, and the distressing effects of sin need no longer persist in one's life. Indeed, they cannot persist if one truly understands the meaning of Christ's Atonement. Ammon conquered thoughts of past unworthiness by remembering the mercy of the Redeemer. He marveled, "Behold, he did not exercise his justice upon us, but in his great mercy hath brought us . . . the salvation of our souls."¹⁸

When memory of past mistakes encroaches upon your mind, turn your thoughts to the Redeemer and to the miracle of forgiveness, with the renewal that comes through Him. Your depression and suffering will be replaced by peace, joy, and gratitude for His love.

How difficult it must be for Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, to see so many needlessly suffer because His gift of repentance is ignored. It must pain Him deeply to see the pointless agony, both in this life and beyond the veil, that accompany the unrepentant sinner after all He did so that we need not suffer.

Sexual intimacy outside marriage is sin

Many youth have been led to believe that sexual intimacy is “not that bad” as long as it does not involve the act that could cause pregnancy. That is false. Sexual intimacy in any of its forms, outside the covenant of marriage, is serious sin. Serious sin is addictive. It forges binding habits that are difficult to sever. If you have broken such laws, seek help from your bishop or stake president, since such transgression requires a confession both to the Lord and to such a judge as a necessary step toward forgiveness. These sins can be avoided by not permitting anyone to touch the private, sacred parts of your body and by refusing to do that with anyone else.

Invitation to repent and come back

Have you wandered from the path of joy and now find yourself where you do not want to be, with feelings you do not want to have? Is there a yearning to return to the peace and joy of a worthy life? I invite you with all the love of my heart to repent and come back. Decide to do it now. That journey is not as difficult as it seems. You can cast out guilt, overcome depression, receive the blessing of peace of mind, and find enduring joy. Pray for help and guidance, and you will be led to

find it. Go to where you know the light of truth shines—to a worthy friend, a loving bishop or stake president, an understanding parent. Please come back. We love you. We need you. Follow the path to peace and joy through complete repentance. The Savior will help you obtain forgiveness as you sincerely follow all of the steps to repentance. He is the Redeemer. He loves you. He wants you to have peace and joy in your life. Now I testify that He lives. He will help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:9.
2. Moses 5:8.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 19:13, 20.
4. 2 Nephi 9:21, 23.
5. See 2 Nephi 9:8–10; 2:5.
6. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 100–101.
7. See Enos 1:10.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31–32.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 53:7.
10. Alma 38:8–9.
11. See Alma 26:22.
12. See Alma 32:13.
13. 2 Nephi 2:7; italics added.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 61:2.
15. See 2 Corinthians 7:9–10.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43.
17. See Alma 48:17–18.
18. Alma 26:20.

Elder Donald L. Hallstrom

The influence of culture and tradition

I will ever be grateful for having been born and nurtured in Hawaii, part of what the scriptures often refer to as “the isles of the sea.” Called a melting pot because of its multiethnic composition, Hawaii has more accurately been referred to as a “delicious stew,” with each culture maintaining an identity but blending together in a harmonious societal broth which can be savored by all.

Having additionally served a mission in England, spending significant time on the United States mainland, and now living and serving in Asia, I have long been interested in culture and tradition and their influence on how we look, think, and act. *Culture* is defined as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and . . . traits of a . . . group” (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. [1993], 282). Traditions, established patterns of behavior transmitted from generation to generation, are an

inherent part of culture. Our culture and its related traditions help establish our sense of identity and fill the vital human need to belong.

Uplifting traditions

Of traditions which are complementary to the gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul admonished the Thessalonians, "Therefore, . . . stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught" (2 Thessalonians 2:15). In the Church, powerful traditions remind us of the strength and sacrifice of our ancestors and inspire our efforts. Among them are industry, frugality, and complete devotion to a righteous cause. Others are based on doctrine and standards which may seem peculiar to the world but are consistent with God's pattern. These include chaste behavior, modesty of dress, unpolluted language, Sabbath observance, adherence to the Word of Wisdom, and the payment of tithes.

Even in ethnic culture, many traditions can reinforce gospel standards and principles. For example, anciently, Hawaiians had a practice, the spirit of which is still exhibited today by many in the islands. When greeting another person, one would come face-to-face and offer an expression of "ha," even expelling their breath for another to feel. The literal translation of *ha* is "the breath of life." It was a way to give of oneself and show another a deep sense of brotherly love and caring. When foreigners first came to Hawaii, they did not exhibit this same respect for others. They were called *haole*, *ha-ole*, meaning "without ha."

If there is a people who should have "ha"—an intense feeling of charity and compassion toward others—it is members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A true Latter-day Saint possesses a love for others that is consistent with the belief that everyone is a brother or a sister.

Uplifting traditions play a significant role in leading us toward the things of the Spirit. Those that promote love for Deity and unity in families and among people are especially important.

Unwanted traditions

The power of tradition, however, poses a significant danger. It can cause us to forget our heavenly heritage. To achieve eternal goals, we must reconcile our earthly culture with the doctrine of the everlasting gospel. This process involves embracing all that is spiritually elevating in our family and societal traditions and discarding that which is a barrier to our eternal view and achievement. We must transform ourselves from being "natural" men and women, as defined by King Benjamin, and become Saints by yielding "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit" (Mosiah 3:19).

Also warning of this peril and its gravity, the Prophet Joseph Smith was inspired to clarify one of Paul's epistles to the people of Corinth by stating:

"And it came to pass that the children, being brought up in subjection to the law of Moses, gave heed to the traditions of their fathers and believed not the gospel of Christ, wherein they became unholy" (D&C 74:4).

Please be not dismissive and think this principle applies only to others and their culture; know that it is valid for you and for me, wherever on earth we may live or whatever our family circumstances may be.

Unwanted traditions are those which lead us away from performing holy ordinances and keeping sacred covenants. Our guide should be the doctrine taught by the scriptures and the prophets. Traditions which devalue marriage and family, abase women or do not recognize the majesty of their God-given roles, honor temporal success more than spiritual, or teach that reliance upon God is a weak-

ness of character all lead us away from eternal truths.

Cultivate a tradition of righteousness

Of all the traditions we should cultivate within ourselves and our families, a "tradition of righteousness" should be preeminent. Hallmarks of this tradition are an unwavering love for God and His Only Begotten Son, respect for prophets and priesthood power, a constant seeking of the Holy Spirit, and the discipline of discipleship, which transforms believing into doing. A tradition of righteousness sets a pattern for living which draws children closer to parents, and both closer to God, and elevates obedience from a burden to a blessing.

In a world where traditions often confuse right and wrong:

- We are inspired by the courage of each young person who has honored the Sabbath day, kept the Word of Wisdom, and remained chaste when popular culture has established the opposite as not only acceptable but expected.

- We are inspired by the wisdom of each man who has molded a career which properly supports his premier responsibility to spiritually lead his family when wealth and power are more highly valued by the world.

- We are inspired by the nobility of each husband and wife who have established a relationship of equality and kindness when one of selfishness and indifference is so common.

As the supernal nature of our life begins to be understood and experienced, we desire nothing temporal to impede our celestial journey.

Humbled by the responsibility but joyous in the opportunity to preach the gospel and bear witness in all the world, I affirm my knowledge of eternal truths and everlasting culture. I testify of 15 men with prophetic calling and apostolic authority and one among them, even President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides with dignity, vision, and a clear sense of righteous tradition. Of most significance, I testify of the Savior and Redeemer of mankind, of His Church, and of His atoning love, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Following the singing, Elders Ronald A. Rasband and Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy will address us. They will be followed by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Ronald A. Rasband

Gratitude for calling and family

My dear brothers and sisters, I feel it a great privilege and honor to stand here at this pulpit today. I pray for the blessing of the Holy Spirit, that what I say may add to the spiritual feelings we all experience at conference time.

I would be very ungrateful if I did not take this opportunity to thank the Lord in all sincerity for my calling as a Seventy. I would also like to thank our dear prophet, President Hinckley, and his fellow leaders of the Church for their confidence in me. I pledge to them and

all of you my best efforts in the years of service that lie before me.

Through many hours of reflection, I have been drawn back to my pioneer ancestors in deep appreciation. All eight of my great-grandparents came into the Church as early converts. Six of the eight immigrated to the United States from Europe, where I am now serving. I feel a deep sense of love and connection to the European Saints and commit myself to do all that I possibly can to strengthen the Church and build up the kingdom of God there or wherever I may be assigned.

I express my love and gratitude to my dear eternal companion and choice family for their devoted support and love. I wish to convey my love to our friends and dear missionaries whom we recently served with in the New York New York North Mission. One of the great blessings of my life is that of treasured friends and close associates whom I have had the privilege to know and learn from.

Jesus loves us all one by one

Throughout my life, I have come to know through my own experiences that Heavenly Father hears and answers our personal prayers. I know that Jesus is the living Christ and that He knows each of us individually, or, as the scriptures express it, “one by one.”

This sacred assurance was taught compassionately by the Savior Himself in His appearance to the people of Nephi. We read of this in 3 Nephi, chapter 11, verse 15:

“And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth *one by one* until they had all gone forth” (italics added).

Further illustrating the “one by one” nature of our Savior’s ministry is the account in 3 Nephi, chapter 17, verse 9:

“And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them *every one* as they were brought forth unto him” (italics added).

We then read of the special blessing given to the precious children in verse 21:

“And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, *one by one*, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them” (italics added).

This was not a small gathering. In verse 25 we read:

“And they were in number about two thousand and five hundred souls; and they did consist of men, women, and children.”

Certainly there is a very profound and tender personal message here. Jesus Christ ministers to, and loves us all, one by one.

We should serve others one by one

As we reflect on our Savior’s way of loving, we sustain you dedicated stake and ward leaders—men and women of great faith. We gratefully recognize the many efforts of those of you working with the youth. And we express great appreciation to our caring Primary leaders and teachers for your Christlike service. We consider each of your one-by-one ministries and say thank you and please, please continue. Perhaps never in the history of mankind do we need to be serving on a one-by-one basis more than we do now.

Inspiration to invite an elder to pray

During the final months of our mission last year, we experienced an event that taught once again this profound prin-

ciple that each of us is known and loved by God.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell was coming to New York City for some Church business, and we were informed that he would also like to have a mission conference. We were so pleased to have this opportunity to hear from one of the Lord's chosen servants. I was asked to select one of our missionaries to provide the opening prayer for the meeting. I might have randomly picked one of the missionaries to pray, but felt to ponder and prayerfully select one whom the Lord would have me ask. In going through the missionary roster, a name boldly stood out to me: Elder Joseph Appiah of Accra, Ghana. He was the one I felt the Lord wanted to pray at the meeting.

Prior to the mission conference, I was having a regularly scheduled interview with Elder Appiah and told him of the prompting that I had received for him to pray. With amazement and humility in his eyes, he began to weep deeply. Somewhat surprised by his reaction, I started to tell him that it was all right and he wouldn't have to pray, when he informed me he would love to offer the prayer, that his emotion was caused by the love he has for Elder Maxwell. He told me that this Apostle is very special to the Saints in

Ghana and to his own family. Elder Maxwell had called his father to be the district president in Accra and had sealed his mother and father in the Salt Lake Temple.

Now, I didn't know any of what I just related about this missionary or his family, but the Lord did and inspired a mission president on behalf of *one* missionary to provide a lifelong memory and testimony-building experience.

At the meeting, Elder Appiah offered a wonderful prayer and made a humble contribution to a meeting where Elder Maxwell taught the missionaries of the attributes of Jesus Christ. All who were there will never forget the feelings of love they experienced for their Savior.

Come to the Savior one by one

I have a testimony in my heart, brothers and sisters, that God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ know and love us individually. I'm not sure I fully understand how; I just know and have experienced that They do. I urge all of us in our own ministries—to our families and to our fellowman—to embrace the Savior's warm invitation to come unto Him, one by one, and be perfected in Him.

I share this witness and hope, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Douglas L. Callister

Seeking the Spirit—an urgent quest

In Italy there is a majestic sculpture of Moses with a crack on one of the knees. A tour guide may say that Michelangelo, viewing the masterpiece, hurled a chisel at the sculpture and exclaimed in disdain, "Why doesn't it speak?"

Unlike the inanimate stone, the true Church of Jesus Christ is filled with life.

The voice, Spirit, and power of God are found in our worship services or whenever the ordinances of the holy priesthood are administered.

Elijah inquired of Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee." Elisha said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."¹ He could not have asked for anything greater.

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith has written: "The Spirit of God speaking to the spirit of man has power to impart truth. . . . Through the Holy Ghost the truth is woven into the very fibre and sinews of the body so that it cannot be forgotten."²

With our confirmation as Church members, the door is opened for us to pursue this heavenly endowment. This should be an urgent and lifelong quest.

Spirit makes us more observant of beauty

As we become more conversant with the Holy Spirit, our lives become refined. The sordid and base have no attraction. It is developed spirituality which separates us from the secular world.

A spiritual-minded man is observant of the beauty in the world around him. As the earth was organized, the Lord saw that "it was good." Then "it was very good."³ It pleases our Father in Heaven when we, also, pause to note the beauty of our environment, which we will naturally do as we become more spiritually sensitive. Our awareness of grand music, literature, and sublime art is often a natural product of spiritual maturity. In poetic allusion to the theophany of Moses and the burning bush, Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote, "Earth's crammed with heaven, / And every common bush afire with God; / And only he who sees takes off his shoes."⁴

Spirit enhances our scripture reading

As we seek the Spirit, our scripture reading becomes more reflective. We rediscover the virtue of slow reading. There is more reading aloud, as perhaps the scriptures were meant to be read. Brigham Young said: "All I have to do is . . . keep my spirit, feelings and conscience like a sheet of blank paper, and let the spirit and power of God write upon it what he pleases. When he writes, I will read; but if I read before he writes, I am very likely to be wrong."⁵

As an evidence of increased spirituality, we become more selective in what we read. J. Reuben Clark said, "My rule now is, never read anything that is not worth remembering."⁶ Thomas Jefferson always read something ennobling just before he retired, "whereon to ruminate in the intervals of sleep."⁷

Spirit helps us have improved prayer

Another fruit of spiritual maturity is improved prayer. More than 30 years ago, President Kimball called me to serve as a stake president. At the conclusion of a long conference weekend, I inquired if he had counsel for me. He replied, "Go teach the Latter-day Saints how to pray. As a people we must not forget how to commune with our Heavenly Father. That is all." Most of the profound and important teachings in the Church are simple.

Become supremely spiritual beings

Those who have made it their quest to realize the constant companionship of the Holy Spirit will awaken in the next life as spiritual giants, in contrast to the infancy of others who have lived without God in this world.

One of the spiritually advanced was President Joseph F. Smith. A member of the Twelve said of him: "Spiritually, he was the most high-minded of any man I ever met. I visited the Tabernacle where President Smith blessed the Latter-day Saints. For 20 minutes he blessed them. For 20 minutes there was not a dry eye in the Tabernacle."⁸

Bishop Charles W. Nibley said at the passing of Joseph F. Smith:

"Never was man more moral and chaste and virtuous to the last fiber of his being than he. Against all forms or thoughts of licentiousness, he was set, and as immovable as a mountain."⁹

"As a preacher of righteousness, who could compare with him? He was the greatest that I ever heard—strong, pow-

erful, clear, appealing. It was marvelous how the words of living light and fire flowed from him. . . . [When] the heart of President Smith was attuned to the Celestial melodies—he could hear, and [he] did hear.”¹⁰

Another who developed this great talent of spirituality was President David O. McKay, causing Elder Bryant S. Hinckley to write, “David O. McKay has done many good things and said many beautiful things but somehow he is finer than anything he has ever said or done.”¹¹

The great battle of our premortal estate was a struggle for individual souls. It is the same battle we wage here, which is to become supremely spiritual beings. President McKay said, “Spirituality is the consciousness of victory over self.”¹² It is the sure knowledge that we are winning the struggle for the soul. Sensuality is the realm of self-indulgence. Spirituality is the realm of self-victory.

Keep covenants and seek the Spirit

I attended a Church class in which the instructor asked what counsel we would give our children in the closing moments of life. I answered, “First, keep your covenants. God keeps His. It will mean much to stand before your Father in Heaven and report: ‘I am home. I am clean. I have done all I covenanted to do.’”

Second, seek the Spirit of God. The scriptures plead: “Quench not the Spirit.”¹³ “Grieve not the . . . Spirit.”¹⁴ It will not come to impure hearts or minds. It comes quietly and without drama. A listening ear can hear the faint rustle of a wing. If we do not listen, it will leave.

I testify that the workings of the Spirit are real and are found in this Church. I also testify of Christ, the Redeemer, and the work He has instituted in this dispensation. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 2 Kings 2:9.
2. “The Sin against the Holy Ghost,” *Instructor*, Oct. 1935, 431.
3. Genesis 1:4, 31.
4. *Aurora Leigh*, 7:821–23.
5. *Deseret News Weekly*, 19 Apr. 1871, 125.
6. Quoted by Joseph L. Wirthlin, in Conference Report, Apr. 1947, 85.
7. *The Best Letters of Thomas Jefferson*, sel. J. G. de Rouilhac Hamilton (1926), 227.
8. Personal conversation with Elder LeGrand Richards on 1 July 1978.
9. Quoted in Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 524–25.
10. *Gospel Doctrine*, 522.
11. “Greatness in Men—David O. McKay,” *Improvement Era*, May 1932, 446.
12. *Gospel Ideals* (1953), 390.
13. 1 Thessalonians 5:19.
14. Ephesians 4:30.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

The challenge to become

The Apostle Paul taught that the Lord’s teachings and teachers were given that we may all attain “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). This process requires far more

than acquiring knowledge. It is not even enough for us to be *convinced* of the gospel; we must act and think so that we are *converted* by it. In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to *know* something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to *become* something.

Many Bible and modern scriptures speak of a final judgment at which all persons will be rewarded according to their deeds or works or the desires of their hearts. But other scriptures enlarge upon this by referring to our being judged by the *condition* we have achieved.

The prophet Nephi describes the Final Judgment in terms of what we *have become*: "And if their works have been filthiness they must needs *be* filthy; and if they *be* filthy it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God" (1 Nephi 15:33; italics added). Moroni declares, "He that *is* filthy shall be filthy still; and he that *is* righteous shall be righteous still" (Mormon 9:14; italics added; see also Revelation 22:11–12; 2 Nephi 9:16; D&C 88:35). The same would be true of "selfish" or "disobedient" or any other personal attribute inconsistent with the requirements of God. Referring to the "state" of the wicked in the Final Judgment, Alma explains that if we are condemned by our words, our works, and our thoughts, "we shall not be found spotless; . . . and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God" (Alma 12:14).

Becoming what our Father desires

From such teachings we conclude that the Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.

A parable illustrates this understanding. A wealthy father knew that if he were to bestow his wealth upon a child who had not yet developed the needed wisdom and stature, the inheritance would

probably be wasted. The father said to his child:

"All that I have I desire to give you—not only my wealth, but also my position and standing among men. That which I *have* I can easily give you, but that which I *am* you must obtain for yourself. You will qualify for your inheritance by learning what I have learned and by living as I have lived. I will give you the laws and principles by which I have acquired my wisdom and stature. Follow my example, mastering as I have mastered, and you will become as I am, and all that I have will be yours."

This parable parallels the pattern of heaven. The gospel of Jesus Christ promises the incomparable inheritance of eternal life, the fulness of the Father, and reveals the laws and principles by which it can be obtained.

Conversion requires us to *do* and *become*

We qualify for eternal life through a process of *conversion*. As used here, this word of many meanings signifies not just a convincing but a profound change of nature. Jesus used this meaning when He taught His chief Apostle the difference between a testimony and a conversion. Jesus asked his disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matthew 16:13). Next He asked, "But whom say ye that I am?"

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:15–17).

Peter had a *testimony*. He knew that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, and he declared it. To *testify* is to know and to declare.

Later on, Jesus taught these same men about *conversion*, which is far more than testimony. When the disciples asked

who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be *converted*, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:2-4; italics added).

Later the Savior confirmed the importance of being converted, even for those with a testimony of the truth. In the sublime instructions given at the Last Supper, He told Simon Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32).

In order to strengthen his brethren—to nourish and lead the flock of God—this man who had followed Jesus for three years, who had been given the authority of the holy apostleship, who had been a valiant teacher and testifier of the Christian gospel, and whose testimony had caused the Master to declare him blessed still had to be "converted."

Jesus' challenge shows that the conversion He required for those who would enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matthew 18:3) was far more than just being converted to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel. To testify is to *know* and to *declare*. The gospel challenges us to be "converted," which requires us to *do* and to *become*. If any of us relies solely upon our knowledge and testimony of the gospel, we are in the same position as the blessed but still unfinished Apostles whom Jesus challenged to be "converted." We all know someone who has a strong testimony but does not act upon it so as to be converted. For example, returned missionaries, are you still seeking to be converted, or are you caught up in the ways of the world?

Gospel is the plan by which we become

The needed conversion *by* the gospel begins with the introductory experience the scriptures call being "born again" (see Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; John 3:7; 1 Peter 1:23). In the waters of baptism and by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, we become the spiritual "sons and daughters" of Jesus Christ, "new creatures" who can "inherit the kingdom of God" (Mosiah 27:25-26).

In teaching the Nephites, the Savior referred to what they must become. He challenged them to repent and be baptized and be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, "that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:20). He concluded: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27).

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the plan by which we can become what children of God are supposed to become. This spotless and perfected state will result from a steady succession of covenants, ordinances, and actions, an accumulation of right choices, and from continuing repentance. "This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32).

Conversion and family relationships

Now is the time for each of us to work toward our personal conversion, toward becoming what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. As we do so, we should remember that our family relationships—even more than our Church callings—are the setting in which the most important part of that development can occur. The conversion we must achieve requires us to be a good husband and father or a good wife and mother. Being a successful Church leader is not enough. Exaltation is an eternal family experience,

and it is our mortal family experiences that are best suited to prepare us for it.

Focus on what others are becoming

The Apostle John spoke of what we are challenged to become when he said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2; see also Moroni 7:48).

I hope the importance of conversion and becoming will cause our local leaders to reduce their concentration on statistical measures of actions and to focus more on what our brothers and sisters *are* and what they are striving to *become*.

Adversity can help us become converted

Our needed conversions are often achieved more readily by suffering and adversity than by comfort and tranquility, as Elder Hales taught us so beautifully this morning. Father Lehi promised his son Jacob that God would "consecrate [his] afflictions for [his] gain" (2 Nephi 2:2). The Prophet Joseph was promised, "Thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high" (D&C 121:7-8).

Most of us experience some measure of what the scriptures call "the furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48:10; 1 Nephi 20:10). Some are submerged in service to a disadvantaged family member. Others suffer the death of a loved one or the loss or postponement of a righteous goal like marriage or childbearing. Still others struggle with personal impairments or with feelings of rejection, inadequacy, or depression. Through the justice and mercy of a loving Father in Heaven, the refinement and sanctification possible through such experiences can help us achieve what God desires us to become.

Do things for the right reason: charity

We are challenged to move through a process of conversion toward that status and condition called eternal life. This is achieved not just by doing what is right, but by doing it for the right reason—for the pure love of Christ. The Apostle Paul illustrated this in his famous teaching about the importance of charity (see 1 Corinthians 13). The reason charity never fails and the reason charity is greater than even the most significant acts of goodness he cited is that charity, "the pure love of Christ" (Moroni 7:47), is not an *act* but a *condition* or state of being. Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in a conversion. Charity is something one becomes. Thus, as Moroni declared, "except men shall *have* charity they cannot inherit" the place prepared for them in the mansions of the Father (Ether 12:34; italics added).

Parable of the laborers in the vineyard

All of this helps us understand an important meaning of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, which the Savior gave to explain what the kingdom of heaven is like. As you remember, the owner of the vineyard hired laborers at different times of the day. Some he sent into the vineyard early in the morning, others about the third hour, and others in the sixth and ninth hours. Finally, in the eleventh hour he sent others into the vineyard, promising that he would also pay them "whatsoever is right" (Matthew 20:7).

At the end of the day the owner of the vineyard gave the same wage to every worker, even to those who had come in the eleventh hour. When those who had worked the entire day saw this, "they murmured against the goodman of the house" (Matthew 20:11). The owner did not yield but merely pointed out that he

had done no one any wrong, since he had paid each man the agreed amount.

Like other parables, this one can teach several different and valuable principles. For present purposes its lesson is that the Master's reward in the Final Judgment will not be based on how long we have labored in the vineyard. We do not obtain our heavenly reward by punching a time clock. What is essential is that our labors in the workplace of the Lord have caused us to *become* something. For some of us this requires a longer time than for others. What is important in the end is what we have become by our labors.

Many who come in the eleventh hour have been refined and prepared by the Lord in ways other than formal employment in the vineyard. These workers are like the prepared dry mix to which it is only necessary to "add water"—the perfecting ordinance of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. With that addition—even in the eleventh hour—these workers are in the same state of development and qualified to receive the same reward as those who have labored long in the vineyard.

Never give up hope

This parable teaches us that we should never give up hope and loving associations with family members and friends whose fine qualities (see Moroni 7:5–14) evidence their progress toward what a loving Father would have them become. Similarly, the power of the Atonement and the principle of repentance show that we should never give up on loved ones who now seem to be making many wrong choices.

Instead of being judgmental about others, we should be concerned about ourselves. We must not give up hope. We must not stop striving. We are children of God, and it is possible for us to become what our Heavenly Father would have us become.

Ways to measure our progress

How can we measure our progress? The scriptures suggest various ways. I will mention only two.

After King Benjamin's great sermon, many of his hearers cried out that the Spirit of the Lord "has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2). If we are losing our desire to do evil, we are progressing toward our heavenly goal.

The Apostle Paul said that persons who have received the Spirit of God "have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). I understand this to mean that persons who are proceeding toward the needed conversion are beginning to see things as our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, see them. They are hearing His voice instead of the voice of the world, and they are doing things in His way instead of by the ways of the world.

I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, whose Church this is. I testify with gratitude of the plan of the Father, under which, through the Resurrection and Atonement of our Savior, we have the assurance of immortality and the opportunity to become what is necessary for eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elders Ronald A. Rasband and Douglas L. Callister of the Seventy have just spoken to us, followed by Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting which will commence here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

Prior to the nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning, there will be a brief cornerstone ceremony for

the Conference Center at 9:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. *Music and the Spoken Word* will follow from 9:30 to 10:00. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

In preparation for the special dedicatory session which will take place tomorrow morning in the opening session, we invite those in attendance and participating everywhere to have available a white handkerchief.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express gratitude to the combined Missionary Training Center choir for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. They will now sing "Called to Serve," after which Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Merrill C. Oaks of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Called to Serve."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

The tugs and pulls of the world

For true believers, the tugs and pulls of the world—including its pleasures, power, praise, money, and preeminence—have always been there. Now, however, many once-helpful support systems are bent or broken. Furthermore, the harmful things of the world are marketed by pervasive technology and hyped by a media barrage, potentially reaching almost every home and hamlet. All this when many are already tuned out of spiritual things, saying, "I am rich, . . . increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Revelation 3:17).

Contrastingly, the perks of discipleship are such that if we see a stretch limousine pulling up, we know it is not calling for us. God's plan is not the plan of pleasure; it is the "plan of happiness."

The tugs and pulls of the world are powerful. Worldly lifestyles are cleverly reinforced by the rationalization "everybody is doing it," thus fanning or feigning a majority. Products are promoted

and attitudes engendered by clever niche marketing.

Peter counseled, "Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (2 Peter 2:19). Brothers and sisters, there are so many personalized prisons!

Scoffers display the shoulder-shrugging attitude foretold by Peter: "Where is the promise of [Christ's] coming? for . . . all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:4). Such cynicism mistakes the successive casts on the mortal stage for the absence of a Director or a script.

Like goldfish in a bowl, some are mindless of who changes the water and puts in the pellets (see Jacob 4:13–14), or, like a kindergarten child whose retrieving parent seems a little late, concluding, "Man is alone in the universe."

Granted, some sincerely wish for more power in order to do good, but only a few individuals are good enough to be powerful. But craving power and

the spotlight sucks out the spiritual oxygen, leaving some “past feeling” (Ephesians 4:19; 1 Nephi 17:45; Moroni 9:20). Strangely, though desensitized, some are still able to hear the beckoning click of a TV camera at a hundred yards. Doesn’t the churning over the places of mortal power remind us of the childhood game of musical chairs?

Actually, discipleship may keep the honors of the world from us. As Balak told Balaam, “I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honour” (Numbers 24:11–12).

The rouge of recognition is so easily smeared anyway. We wince as we watch those once flattered by the world, like Judas, being used, despised, and discarded (see Matthew 27:3–5; D&C 121:20). Nevertheless, when some of these are ready, even their hands need to be lifted up (see Hebrews 12:12; D&C 81:5).

Thus, while granting the deserved role of commendation and praise, we must not forget the words of Jesus about the recipients of mortal honors: “They have their reward” (Matthew 6:2, 5).

There is an underlying reason, brothers and sisters, for all this fleetingness: those who bestow the transitory things of the world are themselves transients. They cannot confer that which is lasting because they do not possess it! Some, so sensing and seeing so little, want to have it all now!

Suggestions for overcoming the world

Such lamentations as the foregoing lead to several specific suggestions.

Access the gifts of the Holy Ghost

To begin with, no remedy is more powerful than accessing—more than we do—the gifts of the Holy Ghost!

Honor the place of the family

Let us likewise honor the special place of the family. As James Q. Wilson wrote:

“We learn to cope with the people of this world because we learn to cope with the members of our family. Those who flee the family flee the world; bereft of the [family’s] affection, tutelage, and challenges, they are unprepared for the [world’s] tests, judgments, and demands” (*The Moral Sense* [1993], 163).

How ironic that some go “into a far country” (Luke 15:13), leaving the nourishing family garden—in which there may be some weeds—and go into a desert with its tumbling sagebrush.

Develop personal righteousness

Personal righteousness, worship, prayer, and scripture study are so crucial in order to “[put] off the natural man” (Mosiah 3:19). Be wary, therefore, when some demand public tolerance for whatever their private indulgences are!

Choose good friends

Whether young or old, we need to be good friends, but also to pick our friends carefully. By choosing the Lord *first*, choosing one’s friends becomes easier and much safer. Consider the contrasting friendships in the city of Enoch compared to peers in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah! The citizens of the city of Enoch chose Jesus and a way of life, then became everlasting friends. So much depends on whom and what we seek *first*.

Flee from threatening situations

We can also emulate the spiritual reflexes of Joseph in Egypt: when he was tempted, “he . . . fled” (Genesis 39:12), showing both courage and good legs!

Youth and adults must get out of circumstances and situations which threaten.

The returning prodigals are never numerous enough, but regularly some come back from "a far country" (Luke 15:13). Of course, it is better if we are humbled "because of the word" rather than being compelled by circumstances, yet the latter may do! (see Alma 32:13-14). Famine can induce spiritual hunger.

Like the prodigal son, we too can go to "a far country," which may be no further away than a vile rock concert. The distance to "a far country" is not to be measured by miles but by how far our hearts and minds are from Jesus! (see Mosiah 5:13). Fidelity, not geography, really determines the distance!

Even with all of the world's powerful tugs and pulls, spiritual feelings can and do assert themselves anyway. Doubts of doubt can intrude. All the quick fixes do not really cure the emptiness and boredom of secularism.

Further, some who laboriously scale the secular heights find, after all, that they are only squatting atop a small mound of sand! They have worked so hard to get there!

But why covet wealth anyway, if we only "spend money for that which is of no worth . . . [and] which cannot satisfy"? (2 Nephi 9:51).

Be loving and patient

Like Jesus, we can decide, daily or instantly, to give no heed to temptation (see D&C 20:22). We can respond to irritation with a smile instead of a scowl, or by giving warm praise instead of icy indifference. By our being understanding instead of abrupt, others, in turn, may decide to hold on a little longer rather than to give way. Love, patience, and meekness can be just as contagious as rudeness and crudeness.

We can also allow for redemptive turbulence, individually and generally (see 2 Nephi 28:19). Hearts set so much upon the things of the world may have to be broken (see D&C 121:35). Preoccupied minds far from Him may be jolted by a "heads up" (see Mosiah 5:13).

Tell the world to "stand aside"

Many individuals preoccupied by the cares of the world are not necessarily in *transgression*. But they certainly are in *diversion* and thus waste "the days of [their] probation" (2 Nephi 9:27). Yet some proudly live "without God in the world" (Alma 41:11), with gates and doors locked from the inside!

Mark it down, brothers and sisters: people too caught up in themselves will inevitably let other people down!

Let us adopt the attitude recommended by President Brigham Young: "Say to the fields, . . . flocks, . . . herds, . . . gold, . . . silver, . . . goods, . . . chattels, . . . tenements, . . . possessions, and to all the world, stand aside; get away from my thoughts, for I am going up to worship the Lord" (*Deseret News*, 5 Jan. 1854, 2). There are so many ways to say to the world, "Stand aside."

Make even small decisions well

Periodically, husbands and wives can reason together, taking inventory. Minor corrections may be needed, and besides, such conversations can be more precious than we know. Alas, so many couples are too busy.

Moments are the molecules that make up eternity! Years ago, President Hinckley counseled:

"It is not so much the major events as the small day-to-day decisions that map the course of our living. . . . Our lives are, in reality, the sum total of our seem-

ingly unimportant decisions and of our capacity to live by those decisions" (*Caesar, Circus, or Christ?* Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [26 Oct. 1965], 3).

Repent of errors and try again

Mercifully, our errors can soon be swallowed up by resilient repentance, showing the faith to try again—whether in a task or in a relationship. Such resilience is really an affirmation of our true identities! Spirit sons and daughters of God need not be permanently put down when lifted up by Jesus' Atonement. Christ's infinite Atonement thus applies to our finite failures! Hence, the pleading of that special hymn:

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it;
Seal it for thy courts above.
["Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," *Hymns* (1948), no. 70]

It also helps in resisting the tugs and pulls of the world if we, though imperfect, know that currently the course of our life is generally acceptable to the Lord (see *Lectures on Faith* [1985], 67). With sufficient dedication, those quiet assurances can come!

Focus on who we are, not just on what we do

The validation of our worth really comes from knowing *who we are*, not solely from *what we do*. Jesus' searching words remain: "What manner of men [and women] ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27; see also Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48).

Of course, worthwhile doing enhances our character and capacity, but mortal circumstances and opportunities differ so greatly. But amid these differences, we can still become more like Christ in our capacity *to be*—more loving, meek, patient, and submissive.

By paying more attention to what *we are* rather than exclusively to what *we do*, our public and our private persons will be the same—the man or the woman of Christ. Our intrinsic value is *not dependent* upon mortal acclaim anyway; in fact, the world may actually see us as weak and foolish (see 1 Corinthians 1:27). Countering, however, are divine affirmations, including this one: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16).

God is infinitely more interested in our having a place in His kingdom than with our spot on a mortal organizational chart. We may brood over our personal span of control, but He is concerned with our capacity for self-control. Father wants us to come home, bringing our real résumés—ourselves!

Even so, our mortal jealousies still occur regularly over money, turf, a slight, or the "robes" and the "fatted calf" given to others (see Luke 15:22–23).

True belonging occurs when we know who we are and to whom we really belong! Remember the popular lines in *Fiddler on the Roof* about Anatevka? There, "everyone knows *who* he is and *what* God expects him to *do*" (Joseph Stein, *Fiddler on the Roof* [1964], 3; italics added), to which might be added "and what God expects him to *be*."

See things as they really are

Yes, we are free to choose the mortal perks with their short shelf life. However, ahead lies that great moment when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ! (see Mosiah 27:31; D&C 88:104). Then the galleries and the mortal thrones will be empty. Even the great and spacious building will fall—and resoundingly! (see 1 Nephi 8:26–28). Then too, those who have lived without God in the world will confess that God is God! (see Mosiah 27:31). Meanwhile, His character and attributes should evoke adoration and emulation from us.

Isn't it marvelous, brothers and sisters, that God, *who knows everything*, still spends time listening to our prayers? Compared to that cosmic fact, what does the world really have to offer us? One round of applause, one fleeting moment of adulation, or an approving glance from a phantom Caesar?

May God bless us to see things as they really are and as they really will be

(see Jacob 4:13; D&C 93:24), and may we give the glory and honor and praise unto God, which I now do. In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!

The choir sang "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth."

Elder Merrill C. Oaks offered the benediction.

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Conference Center at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 7, 2000. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music for this session was provided by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Roy, Hooper, Kanesville, and Riverdale, Utah. Michael Huff directed the choir. Clay Christiansen was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren, we welcome you to this general priesthood session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Tabernacle, the Assembly Hall, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world. I don't suppose there has ever been a gathering

of priesthood such as that which we have tonight.

The singing for this session will be furnished by an Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Roy, Hooper, Kanesville, and Riverdale, Utah, under the direction of Michael Huff, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

We shall begin this session with the choir singing "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered." Following the singing, the invocation will be given by Elder David E. Sorensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir sang "See the Mighty Priesthood Gathered."

Elder David E. Sorensen offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will sing "My Redeemer Lives," following which Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

"Sanctify yourselves"

Thank you, President Hinckley, for penning the lyrics to that hymn.

Brethren, I love and revere the priesthood of God, and I am honored to stand with those of you who bear it. My message tonight is intended for all of us, whatever our age or years of service, but I do wish to speak specifically to the deacons, teachers, and priests in the Aaronic Priesthood and the young, newly ordained elders in the Melchizedek Priesthood—you of the rising generation, you who must be ready to use your priesthood, often at times and in ways you did not anticipate.

In that spirit my call to you tonight is something of the call Joshua gave to an earlier generation of priesthood bearers, young men and those not so young, who needed to perform a miracle in their time. To these who would need to complete ancient Israel's most formidable task—recapturing and repossessing their promised land of old—Joshua said, "Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the Lord will do wonders among you."¹

Recovery of a young football player

Let me share a story with you suggesting how soon and how unexpectedly those tomorrows can come and in some cases how little time you may have to make hasty, belated preparation.

On the afternoon of Wednesday, September 30, 1998, just two years ago last week, a Little League football team in Inkom, Idaho, was out on the field for its midweek practice. They had completed their warm-ups and were starting to run a few plays from scrimmage. Dark clouds were gathering, as they sometimes do in the fall, and it began to rain lightly, but that was of no concern to a group of boys who loved playing football.

Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, an absolutely deafening crack of thunder

split the air, inseparable from the flash of lightning that illuminated, literally electrified, the entire scene.

At that very moment a young friend of mine, A. J. Edwards, then a deacon in the Portneuf Ward of the McCammon Idaho Stake, was ready for the ball on a handoff that was sure to be a touchdown in this little intersquad bit of horseplay. But the lightning that had illuminated earth and sky struck A. J. Edwards from the crown of his football helmet to the soles of his shoes.

The impact of the strike stunned all the players, knocking a few to the ground, leaving one player temporarily without his sight and virtually all the rest of the players dazed and shaken. Instinctively they started running for the concrete pavilion adjacent to the park. Some of the boys began to cry. Many of them fell to their knees and began to pray. Through it all, A. J. Edwards lay motionless on the field.

Brother David Johnson of the Rapid Creek Ward, McCammon Idaho Stake, rushed to the player's side. He shouted to coach and fellow ward member Rex Shaffer, "I can't get a pulse. He's in cardiac arrest." These two men, rather miraculously both trained emergency medical technicians, started a life-against-death effort in CPR.

Cradling A. J.'s head as the men worked was the young defensive coach of the team, 18-year-old Bryce Reynolds, a member of the Mountain View Ward, McCammon Idaho Stake. As he watched Brother Johnson and Brother Shaffer urgently applying CPR, he had an impression. I am confident it was a revelation from heaven in every sense of the word. He remembered vividly a priesthood blessing that the bishop had once given his grandfather following an equally tragic and equally life-threatening accident years earlier. Now, as he held this

young deacon in his arms, he realized that for the first time in his life he needed to use his newly conferred Melchizedek Priesthood in a similar way. In anticipation of his 19th birthday and forthcoming call to serve a mission, young Bryce Reynolds had been ordained an elder just 39 days earlier.

Whether he audibly spoke the words or only uttered them under his breath, Elder Reynolds said, "A. J. Edwards, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the power and authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood which I hold, I bless you that you will be OK. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen." As Bryce Reynolds closed that brief but fervent blessing offered in the language of an 18-year-old, A. J. Edwards drew his first renewed breath.

The ongoing prayers, miracles, and additional priesthood blessings of that entire experience—including a high-speed ambulance drive to Pocatello and a near-hopeless LifeFlight to the burn center at the University of Utah—all of that the Edwards family can share with us at a later time. It is sufficient to say that a very healthy and very robust A. J. Edwards is in the audience tonight with his father as my special guests. I also recently talked on the telephone with Elder Bryce Reynolds, who has been serving faithfully in the Texas Dallas Mission for the past 17 months. I love these two wonderful young men.

Be ready and worthy to use priesthood

Now, my young friends of both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood, not every prayer is answered so immediately, and not every priesthood declaration can command the renewal or the sustaining of life. Sometimes the will of God is otherwise. But, young men, you will learn, if you have not already, that in frightening, even perilous moments, your faith and your priesthood will demand the very best of you and the best you can call down from heaven. You Aaronic Priesthood

boys will not use your priesthood in exactly the same way an ordained elder uses the Melchizedek, but all priesthood bearers must be instruments in the hand of God, and to be so, you must, as Joshua said, "sanctify yourselves." You must be ready and worthy to act.

"Be ye clean"

That is why the Lord repeatedly says in the scriptures, "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."² Let me tell you what that phrase "bear the vessels of the Lord" means. Anciently it had at least two meanings, both related to the work of the priesthood.

The first refers to the recovery and return to Jerusalem of various temple implements that had been carried into Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. In physically handling the return of these items, those early brethren were reminded by the Lord of the sanctity of anything related to the temple. Therefore, as they carried back to their homeland these various bowls, basins, cups, and other vessels, they themselves were to be as clean as the ceremonial instruments they bore.³

The second meaning is related to the first. Similar bowls and implements were used for ritual purification in the home. The Apostle Paul, writing to his young friend Timothy, said of these, "In a great house there are . . . vessels of gold and of silver, . . . of wood and of earth"—these means of washing and cleansing common in the time of the Savior. But Paul goes on to say, "If a man . . . purge himself [of unworthiness], *he shall be a vessel . . . sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*" Therefore, Paul says, "Flee . . . youthful lusts: . . . follow righteousness, . . . call on the Lord out of a pure heart."⁴

In both of these biblical accounts the message is that as priesthood bearers, not only are we to *handle* sacred vessels and emblems of God's power—think of preparing, blessing, and passing the sacra-

ment, for example—but we are also to *be* a sanctified instrument. Partly because of what we are to *do* but more importantly because of what we are to *be*, the prophets and apostles tell us to “flee . . . youthful lusts” and “call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” They tell us to be clean.

Danger of today's amusements

Now, we live in an age when that cleanliness is more and more difficult to preserve. With modern technology, even your youngest brothers and sisters can be carried virtually around the world before they are old enough to ride a tricycle safely across the street. What were in my generation carefree moments of moviegoing, TV watching, and magazine reading have now, with the additional availability of VCRs, the Internet, and personal computers, become *amusements* fraught with genuine moral danger. I put the word *amusements* in italics. Did you know that the original Latin meaning of the word *amusement* is “a diversion of the mind intended to deceive”? Unfortunately that is largely what “amusements” in our day have again become in the hands of the arch deceiver.

Recently I read an author who said: “Our leisure, even our play, is a matter of serious concern. [That is because] there is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.”⁵ I believe that to be absolutely true, and no such claiming and counterclaiming anywhere is more crucial and conspicuous than that being waged for the minds and morals, the personal purity of the young.

Self-control—our only *real* control

Brethren, part of my warning voice tonight is that this will only get worse. It seems that the door to permissiveness, the door to lewdness and vulgarity and obscenity swings only one way. It only

opens farther and farther; it never seems to swing back. Individuals can choose to close it, but it is certain, historically speaking, that public appetite and public policy will not close it. No, in the moral realm the only real control you have is self-control.

Brethren, if you are struggling with self-control in what you look at or listen to, in what you say or what you do, I ask you to pray to your Father in Heaven for help. Pray to Him as Enos did, who wrestled before God and struggled mightily in the spirit.⁶ Wrestle like Jacob did with the angel, refusing to let go until a blessing had come.⁷ Talk to your mom and dad. Talk to your bishop. Get the best help you can from all the good people who surround you. Avoid at all costs others who would tempt you, weaken your will, or perpetuate the problem. If anyone does not feel fully worthy tonight, he can become worthy through repentance and the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Savior wept and bled and died for you. He has given everything for your happiness and salvation. He certainly is not going to withhold help from you now!

Then you can help others to whom you are sent, now and in the future, as one holding the priesthood of God. You can then, as a missionary, be what the Lord described as “a physician [to] the church.”⁸

“The world is too much with us”

Young men, we love you. We worry about you and want to help you every way we can. Nearly 200 years ago William Wordsworth wrote that “the world is too much with us.”⁹ What on earth would he say about the encroachments pressing in on your souls and sensibilities today? In addressing some of these problems facing you, we are mindful that an absolute multitude of young men is faithfully living the gospel and standing resolutely before the Lord. I am sure that multitude includes the overwhelming majority of all

who are listening here tonight. But the cautions we give to the few are important reminders even to the faithful.

Be ready in time of critical need

In the most difficult and discouraging days of World War II, Winston Churchill said to the people of England:

"To every man there comes . . . that special moment when he is figuratively tapped on the shoulder and offered the chance to do a special thing unique to him and fitted to his talent. What a tragedy if that moment finds him unprepared or unqualified for the work which would be his finest hour."

In an even more serious kind of spiritual warfare, brethren, the day may come—indeed, I am certain *will* come—when in an unexpected circumstance or a time of critical need, lightning will strike, so to speak, and the future will be in your hands. Be ready when that day comes. Be strong. Always be clean. Respect and revere the priesthood that you hold, tonight and forever.

I bear witness of this work, of the power we have been given to direct it,

and of the need to be worthy in administering it. Brethren, I testify that the call in every age—and especially in our age—is Joshua's call: "Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Joshua 3:5.
2. Isaiah 52:11; see also 3 Nephi 20:41; Doctrine and Covenants 38:42; 133:5.
3. See 2 Kings 25:14–15; Ezra 1:5–11.
4. 2 Timothy 2:20–22; italics added.
5. C. S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (1967), 33.
6. See Enos 1:2–10.
7. See Genesis 32:24–26.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 31:10.
9. "The World Is Too Much with Us," line 1.

President Hinckley

We have just heard from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Our next speaker will be Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Presidency of the Seventy. He will be followed by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric.

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander

Sustaining the prophet

Brethren, this evening I would like to share an experience that has great meaning to me. During the Sunday afternoon session of general conference, April 6, 1986, a solemn assembly took place, the purpose of which was to sustain Ezra Taft Benson as prophet, seer, and revelator and 13th President of the Church. All Church members were invited to participate either by being in the Tabernacle or by means of radio or TV. As a family, we

accepted the invitation to participate in our home. Except for one son then serving a mission, all were present—one high priest, one priest, one deacon, an 11-year-old son, and my wife, LeAnn. By direction and in turn, each of us who held the priesthood stood; then all of us together as a family stood to sustain President Benson.

Why does the Lord call prophets, seers, and revelators? And how do we sustain them?

Prophets bear testimony of Christ

The fundamental responsibility of prophets, seers, and revelators, all of whom bear apostolic authority, is to bear certain testimony of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world. This basic call to be a special witness of His name has remained constant whenever Apostles have been on the earth. This testimony, borne of the Holy Ghost through revelation, was the heart of the New Testament Church and is the heart of the Church today.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter bore pure testimony that Jesus of Nazareth was “taken, . . . crucified and slain” and that He was “raised up, having loosed the pains of death,” of which the Apostles were all witnesses.¹ So powerful was this testimony of Jesus Christ, spoken by a living Apostle, that hearts were changed and about 3,000 people were baptized for the remission of their sins. We read that these new converts “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”²

This account in the book of Acts gives deep spiritual meaning to the words that Paul later wrote to the Ephesians—that those who embrace the gospel become “the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”³

In this dispensation of restoration, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “the fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”⁴

In keeping with this divinely mandated responsibility to bear certain witness of the name of Jesus Christ to all the world, the living Apostles of our day have given their testimony. In the proclamation “The Living Christ,” they de-

clare the restoration of His priesthood and Church, testify of His Second Coming, and “bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God.”⁵

Ancient as well as modern Apostles bear witness of the name of Jesus Christ because “there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.”⁶

Prophets teach the word of God

Secondly, prophets, seers, and revelators teach the word of God in clarity that all His children may benefit and be blessed through obedience to their teachings. Of Joseph Fielding Smith, President Hinckley wrote: “He did speak straightforwardly and without equivocation. Such is the mission of a prophet.”⁷

The need for prophetic teachers who know the revealed word of God and who speak it directly and without apology is as important in our day as it has ever been. In a confusing world of conflicting ideas, shifting values, and selfish desire for power, well might we study carefully the conversation between Philip and the man from Ethiopia. As this man was reading the scriptures, Philip ran to him and asked: “Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?”⁸

To the people of the Lord, Alma taught:

“Trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments. . . .

“ . . . And none were consecrated except they were just men.

“Therefore they did watch over their people, and did nourish them with things pertaining to righteousness.”⁹

These words describe perfectly the prophets, seers, and revelators who lead this Church. They speak the words of

God with clarity, authority, and understanding.

Prophets see beyond the present

Thirdly, we sustain 15 men not only as prophets and revelators but as seers also. The presence of seers among us is not much spoken of, yet the ability to see beyond the present lends power and authority to apostolic testimony and teaching. I refer to two scriptures that speak of this important and unique calling. Ammon teaches King Limhi in the Book of Mormon that "a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, . . . and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known."¹⁰

In the Pearl of Great Price we read that the Lord instructed Enoch to anoint his eyes with clay and wash them, that he could see. Enoch did so. "And he beheld . . . things which were not visible to the natural eye; and from thenceforth came the saying abroad in the land: A seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people."¹¹

To the question of what our modern seers are making known that otherwise could not be known and what they are seeing that is not visible to the natural eye, I make a very simple response. Listen, ponder, and prayerfully consider what they are teaching and what they are doing. As you do so, a pattern emerges that reveals much, and therein will the answer to this question be found.

Sustain prophets by heeding them

Now returning to my family's experience with the solemn assembly. At the completion of the voting, President Hinckley, who was conducting, said: "Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your sustaining vote. We feel that you have sustained us not only with your hands but also with your hearts and your faith and prayers,

which we so urgently need, and pray that you will continue to do so."¹² Brethren, our sustaining support of prophets, seers, and revelators is not in the upraised hand alone, but more so in our courage, testimony, and faith to listen to, heed, and follow them.

But I ask myself, if this is so clear, why is it so difficult? There may seem to be many answers to this, but I think, in reality, there is only one. Most of the difficulty can be traced to our desire to be more acceptable to the world than to God.

The teachings of a living prophet are often contrary to the trends of the world. We, as Latter-day Saints and the holders of the priesthood of God, must understand that there is an expanding gulf between the standards of the world and those of the gospel and kingdom of God, and that living prophets will always teach the standards of God. As much as we may want the gospel to accommodate to the world, it can't, it won't, it never has, and it never will.

So much of our modern world is based on self-indulgence, immediate gain and satisfaction, and social acceptance at all cost. The gospel and kingdom of God are so much more than this. Among the characteristics God prizes are patience, long-suffering, endurance, kindness, and brotherly love, none of which is short-term or developed in a moment.

Brethren, to have living prophets, seers, and revelators among us and not listen to them is no better than not having them at all. The prophet Jacob hoped that the words written with so much difficulty on the plates by righteous men would be received by their children with thankful hearts and that they might learn from them "with joy and not with sorrow."¹³ May we be wise enough to do likewise with the words of the living prophets, seers, and revelators of our time.

I bear witness of the saving power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I also bear witness of living apostles, prophets,

seers, and revelators. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Acts 2:23–24; see also verse 32.
2. Acts 2:42.
3. Ephesians 2:20.
4. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 121.
5. "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 3.

6. Mosiah 3:17.
7. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 525.
8. Acts 8:30–31.
9. Mosiah 23:14, 17–18.
10. Mosiah 8:17.
11. Moses 6:36; see also verse 35.
12. In Conference Report, Apr. 1986, 95; or *Ensign*, May 1986, 75.
13. Jacob 4:3.

Bishop Richard C. Edgley

A summer snipe hunt

As a young man having just finished my first year of college and needing to earn money for a desired mission, I spent the summer working at the new Jackson Lake Lodge in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Many college-age youths came to work in that pristine, beautiful area.

One such person was Jill, a young woman from San Francisco, California. Feeling that a young woman from a big city might be a little bit naive about her new environment, I and a few friends felt it our obligation to teach her about the ways of the real West. We decided to take her on a "snipe hunt." For those of you who may not be familiar with a snipe hunt, it is a practical joke, as there is no such thing as a snipe, at least not in the western United States. The tools necessary for a snipe hunt are a stick and a cloth bag. The "hunter" is told to go through the brush, beating the bushes with a stick while calling the snipe in a high-pitched, ridiculous voice. The non-existent snipes are thus to be driven into the cloth bag.

We gave Jill her cloth bag and a stick and an area to hunt across the hill. The plan was to return to our starting point in about 15 minutes, at which time we would supposedly count our snipes.

When she did not return at the appointed time, we gloated and took delight in the seriousness with which she took her hunt. After about 30 minutes, we felt it was time to rescue her, explain the joke, have a good laugh, and all go to dinner. However, it became apparent that she had taken her snipe hunt more seriously than we had expected—she was not to be found in her assigned area. After searching rather extensively and still finding no evidence of her, we began moving into the woods, calling for her at the top of our voices, but to no avail.

Hoping she might have gone back to her dormitory, we returned and asked some young women to search for her there, but this also was to no avail. It was now turning dark, and our concern heightened. We enlisted all the young men we could from the boys' dormitory and with flashlights continued the search deep into the woods.

Well into the darkness of night—frightened, concerned, and hoarse from calling—we decided it was now time to report our ridiculous deed to the park rangers. While we were standing in front of the dorms, trying to determine which brave soul would have the privilege of reporting her disappearance, Jill suddenly appeared—not from her dormitory, but rather from that of a friend with whom

she had enjoyed dinner (which we incidentally missed) and a comfortable evening with her friends. Her first words to us as she approached said it all: "How do you fellows like hunting *snipe hunters*?" Well, so much for big city naïveté, and so much for the ways of the real West. The joke was on us, and I have never had a desire for any more snipe hunting.

Satan's snipe hunt

But there is another "snipe hunt" going on all around us, and we may be the naive victims. It is not a practical joke, and it will not end with a good laugh and a little warm fellowship. Satan is the great deceiver, liar, and enemy to all that is good, including our happiness and our well-being. His great desire is to thwart our Heavenly Father's plan of happiness and make us "miserable like unto himself" (2 Nephi 2:27). Being the very author and perpetrator of deceit, he in effect would invite us to join him in his snipe hunt, to fill our bags with excitement, fun, popularity, and the so-called good life. But his promises are as illusionary as the nonexistent snipe. What he really offers are lies, misery, spiritual degradation, and loss of self-worth.

Satan's sales pitch as he sends us off to fill our bags is, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" (2 Nephi 28:7). His invitation may seem enticing and convincing. Nephi describes his sales techniques as pacifying, flattering, and lulling as he declares, "All is well" (2 Nephi 28:21–22). Among other things Satan would have us put in our bags is immorality in all its forms, including pornography, language, dress, and behavior. But such evil deeds bring emotional distress, loss of spirituality, loss of self-respect, lost opportunity for a mission or temple marriage, and sometimes even unwanted pregnancy. Satan would enslave us by having us put drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and other addictive behaviors into our bags.

How to recognize Satan's deceptions

Satan will tell us that these things are OK and that "everybody is doing it." He will tell us that they bring popularity and acceptance. Satan's lies can be very enticing, especially at that critical time in life when young people are craving acceptance and popularity.

However, there are certain clues to guide us as to what to avoid putting in our bags. You would recognize these clues because they are common and they are familiar—clues such as:

- "Everybody is doing it."
- "Nobody will know."
- "It is not really hurting anyone."
- "It won't hurt just this once."
- "So what?"
- "You can repent later and still go on a mission and be married in the temple."
- "Christ atoned for your sins; He will forgive you."

When such justifications are given either outright by others or subtly by the whisperings of the tempter, you are warned. Don't listen. Don't experiment. Just don't do it.

God's warnings about Satan's deceit

God, our loving Father, the source of all truth, has warned us of Satan's deceit. Listen to what the Lord has said through His prophets:

• Paul taught the Saints in Corinth: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

• Jacob warned the Nephites of old: "But, wo, wo, unto you that are not pure in heart, that are filthy this day before God" (Jacob 3:3).

• Alma reminded his wayward son, Corianton, regarding sexual impurity: "Know ye not, my son, that these things are an abomination in the sight of the Lord?" (Alma 39:5). And then further to Corianton, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

Lest we think these warnings were for biblical times only, listen to what our modern-day prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has said:

"Notwithstanding the so-called 'new morality,' notwithstanding the much-discussed changes in moral standards, there is no adequate substitute for virtue. God's standards may be challenged everywhere throughout the world, *but God has not abrogated his commandments*" ("With All Thy Getting Get Understanding," *Ensign*, Aug. 1988, 4; italics added).

Discern and resist Satan's snipes

So we ask ourselves, "Who are we going to believe in our search for happiness and well-being?" Will it be Satan, the author of all lies and deceit, whose single objective is to destroy us? Or are we going to believe a loving Heavenly Father, who is the source of all truth and happiness, whose sole objective is rewarding us with His eternal love and joy?

We may come from humble circumstances, have limited education, and even have what we consider unimpressive worldly accomplishments. And because

of Satan's deceit, we may at times feel unimportant, insignificant, or incapable. But let us never forget—we are the ones chosen to hold the priesthood of God; we are His called, ordained representatives, and that makes us somebody.

Because of His priesthood, we are empowered. We are royalty. And we have the power to discern between Satan's snipes and God's true principles of happiness. Because we know who we are and because we are endowed with the Holy Spirit and empowered with His priesthood, we have the power to just say no: "No, Satan, I will not be a victim of your deceitful, vicious, and often deadly snipe hunt."

I testify that "wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10) and wickedness never will be happiness. I further testify that happiness and self-worth will come only from living the principles of Him who created the plan of happiness. This I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander of the Presidency of the Seventy has spoken to us, followed by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric.

We shall now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Following President Faust's remarks, the choir and congregation will sing "Hope of Israel."

President James E. Faust

My dear brethren of the priesthood, I express my love and appreciation for each of you. We are grateful for all you do to move this holy work forward in all of the world. I am humbled and honored to be one of you.

Prepare to fight against evil

Even before the world began, a great war in heaven commenced between the forces of good and evil.¹ That war rages today ever more fiercely. Satan is still the

captain of the hosts of evil. He is still tempting us just as he did Moses, saying, "Son of man, worship me."² As priesthood holders we are marshaled into the great army of righteousness to combat the forces of Lucifer. Each of us needs to train ourselves to be bold, disciplined, and loyal men of the priesthood who are prepared with the proper weapons to fight against evil and to win. Paul said these weapons are "the breastplate of righteousness," "the shield of faith," "the helmet of salvation," and "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."³

The enemy within ourselves

Tonight I should like to speak about the battle that each of us has to wage within ourselves. President Joseph F. Smith taught us: "Our first enemy we will find within ourselves. It is a good thing to overcome that enemy first and bring ourselves into subjection to the will of the Father, and into strict obedience to the principles of life and salvation which he has given to the world for the salvation of men."⁴

In simple terms, this means that we need to strengthen the good within us and to overcome the temptations of Satan. The direction finder is sure. Alma tells us, "Whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil."⁵

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Robert Louis Stevenson captured this constant struggle between good and evil in the classic novel about Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The story tells us that in the beginning "Dr. Jekyll is a highly respected London physician, a good and kindly man, who in his youth had showed inclinations toward evil which, however, he succeeded in suppressing. Interested in drugs, the doctor now chances upon one which enables him to change his external form to that of a repulsive dwarf,

the very embodiment of evil, whom he calls Mr. Hyde. A similar dose permits him to return to the form and personality of the benevolent doctor. Many times the doctor becomes Mr. Hyde, thereby giving this side of his nature more and more power. Jekyll finds it increasingly difficult to regain his virtuous entity and also finds himself occasionally becoming Hyde without the use of the drug."⁶ In the character of Mr. Hyde, he commits murder, and when the drug will no longer restore him to the kindly Dr. Jekyll, the truth is discovered and Hyde kills himself. The misuse of drugs destroyed his life. So it can be in real life.

Do not use addictive substances

Now, the key to never turning into an evil, wicked Mr. Hyde is to determine not to yield to destroying temptations. Never, never experiment with any addictive substance. Do not ever use tobacco in any form or take any other enslaving substances. Stay away from intoxicating liquor. Addictions bring tragic consequences that are hard to overcome.

Creed Haymond obeys the Word of Wisdom

Blessings come from holding true to our principles. When I was the president of the Cottonwood stake, one of our stake patriarchs was Dr. Creed Haymond. He would occasionally bear strong testimony of the Word of Wisdom. As a young man he was the captain of the University of Pennsylvania track team. In 1919 Brother Haymond and his team were invited to participate in the annual Inter-Collegiate Association track meet. The night before the track meet, his coach, Lawson Robertson, who later coached several Olympic teams, instructed his team members to drink some sherry wine. In those days, coaches wrongly felt that wine was a tonic for muscles hardened through rigorous training. All the other team members

took the sherry, but Brother Haymond refused because his parents had taught him the Word of Wisdom. Brother Haymond became very anxious because he did not like to be disobedient to his coach. He was to compete against the fastest men in the world. What if he made a poor showing the next day? How could he face his coach?

The next day at the track meet the rest of the team members were very ill and performed poorly or were even too sick to run. Brother Haymond, however, felt well and won the 100- and 220-yard dashes. His coach told him, "You just ran the two hundred and twenty yards in the fastest time it has ever been run by any human being." That night and for the rest of his life, Creed Haymond was grateful for his simple faith in keeping the Word of Wisdom.⁷

Stay on the Lord's side of the line

In the military service during World War II, I associated with some fine young men of great promise. But little by little, I saw some of them turn from the decent, God-fearing qualities of Dr. Jekyll and revert to the baseness of a Mr. Hyde. For some it began by drinking coffee because the water was foul, and the water decontamination pills had such an unpleasant taste. The coffee led some to take an occasional drink of beer. Every soldier serving overseas was allocated a ration of cigarettes and an occasional bottle of whiskey, which were worth considerable money.

President George Albert Smith once gave this advice: "If you cross to the devil's side of the line one inch, you are in the tempter's power, and if he is successful, you will not be able to think or even reason properly, because you will have lost the spirit of the Lord."⁸

Some soldiers stayed on the safe side of the line and never experimented with nor trafficked in these addicting substances, even though they were given to

us free. But others would sample the cigarettes or alcohol as a diversion to the challenges of the war. A few were even drawn away into immorality, believing that the stress of war justified lowering their standards and letting the Mr. Hyde side of their personalities take over.

After the war, those who had become addicted to tobacco, alcohol, and immorality found that they could not readily shake off these bad habits. The young men who had started out with such potential crossed that line inch by inch, robbing themselves and their families of the promised happiness and experiencing instead divorce, broken families, and heartaches.

Those who never lowered their standards did not succumb to these addictions. They came through that stressful period of their lives stronger and more prepared to lead productive, exemplary, and happy lives as faithful fathers and grandfathers of righteous families. They have also served as honored and respected leaders in the Church and in the community.

Pornography is addictive and destructive

Another false philosophy that appeals to the Mr. Hyde side of our natures is that peeking into pornography is harmless. This is a terrible deception. Pornography is as addictive as cocaine or any illegal drug. I recently received a heart-breaking letter from an excommunicated man whose soul is filled with sorrow and regret. With his permission I quote the following from his letter:

"I hope that this letter will confirm to any who have doubt that the path of destruction only reaps sorrow and grief, and no sin is worth this price."

He goes on to state: "I have brought grief and sorrow upon myself. Only now do I fully realize the great destruction that I have brought upon myself. No selfish or lustful desire is worth losing your Church membership for. I have brought

terrible grief to my wife and two wonderful children. I am grateful for my wife's great efforts to help me overcome my sins. My wife has been a victim of my sins and had to endure great sorrow and suffering. I long for the day that I can again be a member of the Lord's Church and for our family to be an eternal family."

The letter goes on to admit: "My sins are a direct result of my early childhood addiction to pornography. Without a doubt, pornography is addictive and is poison. Had I learned early in my life to apply the power of self-mastery, I would be a member of the Church today."

Deception of "premeditated repentance"

One of Mr. Hyde's deceptions is what some erroneously call "premeditated repentance." There is no such doctrine in this Church. This may sound subtly appealing, but it is in fact pernicious and a false concept. Its objective is to persuade us that we can consciously and deliberately transgress with the forethought that quick repentance will permit us to enjoy the full blessings of the gospel, such as temple blessings or a mission. True repentance can be a long, painful process. This foolish doctrine was foreseen by Nephi:

"And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God—he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God."⁹

Of all those who teach this doctrine, the Lord says, "The blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them."¹⁰ This is because all of our covenants must not only be received through ordinances but, to be eternal, must also be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise.¹¹ This divine

stamp of approval is placed upon our ordinances and covenants only through faithfulness. The false idea of so-called premeditated repentance involves an element of deception, but the Holy Spirit of Promise cannot be deceived.

Shun hypocrisy

Some people wear masks of decency and outward righteousness but live lives of deception, believing that, like Dr. Jekyll, they can live a double life and never be found out. James said, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways."¹² In the Book of Mormon we read the account of Corianton, who went on a mission to the Zoramites with his father and brother. His double life caused him to forsake his ministry and his father to lament, "O my son, how great iniquity ye brought upon the Zoramites; for when they saw your conduct they would not believe in my words."¹³

Hypocrites are those who outwardly wear masks that portray goodness but inwardly practice evil and deceit. Such were the scribes and Pharisees who came to the Savior pretending to be troubled in conscience and to be seeking His wise counsel. "Master," they said in flattering tone, "we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men."

With this devious approach they hoped to catch Him off guard as they asked: "Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?"

Their question was loaded with wicked intent because one of the most offensive of the Roman laws was the poll tax. If He had answered, "Yes," the Pharisees could have painted Him as disloyal to the Jews. If His answer had been "No," He could have been denounced for sedition. "But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?"

He asked them to show Him a penny and then asked, "Whose is this image and superscription?" They answered, "Caesar's," and He silenced the hypocritical Pharisees with that classic reply, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's."¹⁴ We are in the world, but we should not be overcome by the hypocrisy and deceit that are in it.

The truth about who we are and what we do will ultimately become known. The Lord has given us this sober reminder: "For their iniquities shall be spoken upon the housetops, and their secret acts shall be revealed."¹⁵ Because we live in a morally desensitized environment, we find it hard to say to ourselves and to others that our actions are not right.

Put the power of the priesthood to work

Brethren, we can shield ourselves against the enemy within each of us by using the protective mantle of the priesthood of God. Individually we need to put the great powers of the holy priesthood to work in our lives. This means using this divine agency daily to bless the lives of others as we do our home teaching, perform ordinances, or hold family home evening.

Collectively, we have the mission to bring the message of salvation to the world, which mission we carry out under the direction of our President, Gordon B. Hinckley, who holds all of the keys of the priesthood on earth at this time. But we cannot fulfill this mission unless each of us wins the battle within ourselves. In so doing we will be able to put on the whole armor of God and receive the blessings contained in the oath and covenant of the priesthood. The Lord has promised:

"All they who receive this priesthood receive me, . . .

"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him."¹⁶

Exaltation in the Father's kingdom includes kingdoms, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers which increase forever.¹⁷ That we may all strive to overcome the enemy within so that we can receive these blessings, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Revelation 12:4-9; Moses 4:1-4; Abraham 3:24-28; Doctrine and Covenants 29:36-38; Isaiah 14:12-20; Luke 10:18.
2. Moses 1:12.
3. Ephesians 6:14, 16-17.
4. *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 253.
5. Alma 5:40.
6. In Hiram Haydn and Edmund Fuller, comps., *Thesaurus of Book Digests* (1949), 206.
7. See Joseph J. Cannon, "Speed and the Spirit," *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1928, 1001-7.
8. *Sharing the Gospel with Others*, sel. Preston Nibley (1948), 43.
9. 2 Nephi 28:8.
10. 2 Nephi 28:10.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:7.
12. James 1:8.
13. Alma 39:11.
14. Matthew 22:16-21.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 1:3.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 84:35, 37-38.
17. See *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 63.

The choir and congregation sang
"Hope of Israel."

President Hinckley

President Faust has just spoken to us. We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

"Let every man learn his duty"

What a privilege is mine to stand before you tonight in this magnificent Conference Center and in assemblies throughout the world. What a mighty body of priesthood!

For a text, I turn to the words spoken through the Prophet Joseph Smith and found in the 107th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. They apply to all of us, whether bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood or the Melchizedek Priesthood: "Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence."¹

President Wilford Woodruff declared: "All the organizations of the priesthood have power. The deacon has power, through the priesthood which he holds. So has the teacher. They have power to go before the Lord and have their prayers heard and answered, as well as the prophet, the seer, or the revelator has. . . . It is by this priesthood that men have ordinances conferred upon them, that their sins are forgiven, and that they are redeemed. For this purpose has it been revealed and sealed upon our heads."²

Magnifying the priesthood as a deacon

Those who bear the Aaronic Priesthood should be given opportunities to magnify their callings in that priesthood.

For example, when I was ordained a deacon, our bishopric stressed the sacred responsibility which was ours to pass the sacrament. Emphasized was proper dress, a dignified bearing, and the importance of being clean inside and out.

As we were taught the procedure in passing the sacrament, we were told that we were assisting every member in a renewal of the covenant of baptism, with its responsibilities and blessings. We were also told how we should assist a particular brother—Louis—who had a palsied

condition, that he might have the opportunity to partake of the sacred emblems.

How I remember being assigned to pass the sacrament to the row where Louis sat. I was hesitant as I approached this wonderful brother, and then I saw his smile and the eager expression of gratitude that showed his desire to partake. Holding the tray in my left hand, I took a piece of bread and pressed it to his open lips. The water was later served in the same way. I felt I was on holy ground. And indeed I was. The privilege to pass the sacrament to Louis made better deacons of us all.

Need for commitment and devotion

Noble leaders of young men, you stand at the crossroads in the lives of those whom you teach. Inscribed on the wall of Stanford University Memorial Church is this truth: that we must teach our youth that all that is not eternal is too short, and all that is not infinite is too small.³

President Gordon B. Hinckley emphasized our responsibilities when he declared:

"In this work there must be commitment. There must be devotion. We are engaged in a great eternal struggle that concerns the very souls of the sons and daughters of God. We are not losing. We are winning. We will continue to win if we will be faithful and true. . . . There is nothing the Lord has asked of us that in faith we cannot accomplish."⁴

Brethren, is every ordained teacher given the assignment to home teach? What an opportunity to prepare for a mission. What a privilege to learn the discipline of duty. A boy will automatically turn from concern for self when he is assigned to "watch over" others.

And what of the priests? These young men have the opportunity to bless the sacrament, to continue their home teach-

ing duties, and to participate in the sacred ordinance of baptism.

We can strengthen one another; we have the capacity to notice the unnoticed. When we have eyes that see, ears that hear, and hearts that know and feel, we can reach out and rescue those for whom we have responsibility.

From Proverbs comes the counsel, and I love it, "Ponder the path of thy feet."⁵

I revere the priesthood of Almighty God. I have witnessed its power. I have seen its strength. I have marveled at the miracles it has wrought.

A priest performs a baptism with power

Fifty years ago I knew a young man—even a priest—who held the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood. As the bishop, I was his quorum president. Robert stuttered and stammered, void of control. He was self-conscious, shy, fearful of himself and all others, and this impediment was devastating to him. Never did he fulfill an assignment; never would he look another in the eye; always he would gaze downward. Then one day, through a set of unusual circumstances, he accepted an assignment to perform the priestly responsibility to baptize another.

I sat next to Robert in the baptistry of the Salt Lake Tabernacle. He was dressed in immaculate white, prepared for the ordinance he was to perform. I leaned over and asked him how he felt. He gazed at the floor and stuttered almost uncontrollably that he felt terrible, terrible.

We both prayed fervently that he would be made equal to his task. Suddenly the clerk said, "Nancy Ann McArthur will now be baptized by Robert Williams, a priest."

Robert left my side, stepped into the font, took little Nancy by the hand, and helped her into that water which cleanses human lives and provides a spiritual rebirth. He spoke the words, "Nancy Ann

McArthur, having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Not once did he stutter! Not once did he falter! A modern miracle had been witnessed. Robert then performed the baptismal ordinance for two or three other children in the same fashion.

In the dressing room, as I congratulated Robert, I expected to hear this same uninterrupted flow of speech. I was wrong. He gazed downward and stammered his reply of gratitude.

To each of you brethren this evening, I testify that when Robert acted in the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood, he spoke with power, with conviction, and with heavenly help.

Help young men serve and build faith

We must provide for our young men of the Aaronic Priesthood faith-building experiences. They seek to have the opportunity we have had to feel the Spirit of the Lord helping them.

I remember when I was assigned to give my first talk in church. I was given the liberty to choose my subject. I've always liked birds, so I thought of the Seagull Monument. In preparation, I went to Temple Square and looked at the monument. First I was attracted to all the coins in the water surrounding the monument. I wondered how they would be retrieved and who would retrieve them. I shall not confess any thought of taking them.

Then I looked upward at the seagulls atop that monument. I tried in my boyish mind to imagine what it would be like to be a pioneer watching the first year's growth of precious grain being devoured by crickets and then seeing those seagulls, with their lofty wings, descending upon the fields and eating the crickets. I loved the account. I sat down with a pencil in hand and wrote out a two-and-one-half-minute talk. I've never forgotten the sea-

gulls. I've never forgotten the crickets. I've never forgotten my knees knocking together as I gave that talk. I've never forgotten the experience of letting some of my innermost feelings be expressed verbally at the pulpit. I would urge that we give the Aaronic Priesthood an opportunity to think, to reason, and to serve.

President David O. McKay remarked: "God help us all to be true to the ideals of the priesthood—Aaronic and Melchizedek. May he help us to magnify our callings and to inspire men by our actions—not only members of the Church, but all men everywhere—to live higher and better lives, to help them all to be better husbands, better neighbors, better leaders, under all conditions."⁶

Look to the lighthouse of the Lord

The world seems to have slipped from the moorings of safety and drifted from the harbor of peace. Permissiveness, immorality, pornography, and the power of peer pressure cause many to be tossed about on a sea of sin and crushed on the jagged reefs of lost opportunities, forfeited blessings, and shattered dreams.

Anxiously some may ask, "Is there a way to safety?" "Can someone guide me?" "Is there an escape from threatened destruction?" The answer, brethren, is a resounding "Yes!" Look to the lighthouse of the Lord. There is no fog so dense, no night so dark, no gale so strong, no mariner so lost but what its beacon light can rescue. It beckons through the storms of life. The lighthouse of the Lord sends forth signals readily recognized and never failing.

There are many such signals. I name but three. Note them carefully; exaltation may depend upon them—yours and mine:

First: Prayer provides peace.

Second: Faith precedes the miracle.

And third: Honesty is the best policy.

God hears our prayers

First, concerning prayer—Adam prayed; Jesus prayed; Joseph prayed. We know the outcome of their prayers. He who notes the fall of a sparrow surely hears the pleadings of our hearts. Remember the promise:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."⁷

Cultivate faith

Next, faith precedes the miracle. It has ever been so and shall ever be. It was not raining when Noah was commanded to build an ark. There was no visible ram in the thicket when Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. Two heavenly personages were not yet seen when Joseph knelt and prayed. First came the test of faith—and then the miracle.

Remember that faith and doubt cannot exist in the same mind at the same time, for one will dispel the other. Cast out doubt. Cultivate faith.

Learning about honesty in boot camp

Finally, honesty is the best policy. I learned this truth in a dramatic manner during boot camp when I served in the navy 55 years ago. After those first three weeks of isolated training, the good news came that we would have our first liberty and could visit the city of San Diego. All of the men were most eager for this change of pace. As we prepared to board the buses to town, the petty officer commanded, "Now all of you men who know how to swim, you stand over here. You will go into San Diego for liberty. Those of you who don't know how to swim, you line up over there. You will go to the swimming pool and have a lesson on how to swim. Only when you learn to swim will you be permitted liberty."

I had been a swimmer most of my life, so I prepared to get on the bus to town; but then that petty officer said to our group, "One more thing before we board the buses. Follow me. Forward, march!" He marched us right to the swimming pool and had us take our clothing off and stand at the edge of the deep end of the pool. Then he directed, "Jump in and swim the length of the pool."

In that group, all of whom could supposedly swim (at least they had so declared) were about 10 who had thought they could fool somebody. They did not really know how to swim. In the water they went, voluntarily or otherwise. Catastrophe was at the door. The petty officers let them go under once or twice before they extended the bamboo pole to pull them to safety. With a few choice words, which I shall not repeat, they then said, "That will teach you to tell the truth!"

How grateful I was that I had told the truth, that I knew how to swim and made it easily to the other end of the pool. Such lessons teach us to be true—true to the faith, true to the Lord, true to our companions, true to all that is sacred and dear to us. That lesson has never left me.

The lighthouse of the Lord beckons us to safety and eternal joy as we are guided by its never-failing signals:

Prayer provides peace.

Faith precedes the miracle.

Honesty is the best policy.

I testify to you this night that Jesus is indeed the Christ, our beloved Redeemer and Savior. We are led by a prophet of almighty God—even President Gordon B. Hinckley. I know you share this same conviction.

A priesthood holder sustains the prophet

I close by reading a simple yet profound letter that reflects our love for our prophet and his leadership:

"Dear President Monson,

"Five years ago, President Hinckley was sustained as prophet, seer, and revelator. For me that was an extraordinary occasion which had to do with your calling for the sustaining vote of the Church.

"On that particular morning, I needed to haul hay for my livestock. I was enjoying conference on my truck radio. I had picked up the hay, backed into the barn, and was throwing down hay bales from the back of the truck. When you called for the brethren of the priesthood, 'wherever you are,' to prepare to sustain the prophet, I wondered if you meant me. I wondered if the Lord would be offended because I was sweaty and covered with dust. But I took you at your word and climbed down from the truck.

"I shall never forget standing alone in the barn, hat in hand, with sweat running down my face, with arm to the square to sustain President Hinckley. Tears mixed with sweat as I sat for several minutes contemplating this sacred occasion."

He continued:

"In our lives, we place ourselves at particular places when events of large consequence occur. That has happened to me, but none more spiritual or tender or memorable than that morning in the barn with only cows and a roan horse looking on.

"Sincerely,

"Clark Cederlof"

President Hinckley, we the priesthood brethren of the Church do love and sustain you. I so testify, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 107:99.
2. *Millennial Star*, 22 Sept. 1890, 595–96; capitalization modernized.
3. See Conference Report, Oct. 1952, 17.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 57; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 44.
5. Proverbs 4:26.

6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 97; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1967, 89.
7. James 1:5.

President Hinckley

Our beloved friend President Thomas S. Monson has just spoken to us.

Prior to the Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning, there will be a brief cornerstone ceremony for the Conference Center at 9:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. *Music and the Spoken Word* will follow from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow that.

In preparation for the special dedicatory session, which will take place tomorrow morning in the opening session, we invite those in attendance and participating everywhere to have available a white handkerchief.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, please drive carefully and go with caution. There are so very many of us.

We express gratitude to this great chorus of young men and to those who have led them.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the chorus singing "Carry On." The benediction will then be offered by Elder H. Bryan Richards of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

Counsel to fathers

It now becomes my pleasure to speak to you, and I hope I get through on time. I haven't timed this. The young men here tonight have received some wonderful counsel. I hope they have listened well and that their lives will be touched for good as a result.

I have chosen to speak to the fathers. You already know what I am going to talk about. Your wives have reminded you that this will be my subject tonight. I told them so at the Relief Society conference two weeks ago. I may say some of the same things to you that I said to them. I remind you that repetition is a law of learning.

Now, this is a subject which I take very seriously. It is a matter with which I am deeply concerned. I hope you will not take it lightly. It concerns the most precious asset you have. In terms of your happiness, in terms of the matters that make you proud or sad, nothing—I repeat, nothing—will have so profound an

effect on you as the way your children turn out.

You will either rejoice and boast of their accomplishments, or you will weep, head in hands, bereft and forlorn, if they become a disappointment or an embarrassment to you.

Many of you are in this meeting with your sons. I compliment you most warmly. I also compliment them. Both of you are in the very best of company. I am so proud of so many of our youth—both boys and girls. They are bright. They are self-disciplined. They take the long view. They have their heads on straight. Tonight they are in the place where they ought to be. Some are singing in this choir. They are seated in congregations across the world. They are serving missions. They are struggling through school, forgoing present pleasures for future opportunities. I admire them. I love them. And so do you. They are our sons and daughters.

I hope, I pray, I plead that they will continue on the path they are now following.

But sad to say, I am confident there are some of our young men who have slipped and are slipping into the foggy swamp of immorality, drugs, pornography, and failure. I hope they are a minority among their peers, but even the loss of one is too many.

"Bad things happen after 11:00"

Fathers, you and their mothers have a responsibility you cannot escape. You are the fathers of your children. Your genetic pattern is forever etched in their genetic code.

While we are in this meeting, some of them, I am satisfied, are out cruising the town. They or their friends have cars to drive. In many cases their fathers bought them. They have handed them the keys and told them to have a good time.

They want to do something exciting. They think that wish is not satisfied with wholesome entertainment. They are drifters, looking to do something that will make them feel macho.

My officer friend told me recently of two young men in the backseat of a police car, handcuffs about their wrists. They had started out innocently enough that evening. Four of them in a car went about looking for excitement. They found it. Soon there was a fight. Then the police cars converged. The boys were detained and handcuffed.

These were good young men. They were not of the kind that go to the jail-house periodically. The mother of one of them had said to him before he left home, "Bad things happen after 11:00."

He had quickly learned the meaning of that statement. He was embarrassed. He was ashamed to face his mother.

Dangerous practices

I told the Relief Society of secret underground drug parties that go by the name of Rave. Here, with flashing lights

and noisy music, if it can be called that, young men and women dance and sway. They sell and buy drugs. The drugs are called Ecstasy. They are a derivative of methamphetamine. The dancers suck on babies' pacifiers because the drug makes them grind their teeth. The hot music and the sultry dancing go on until 7:30 of a Sunday morning. What does it all lead to? Nowhere. It is a dead end.

Now there has developed another practice in this search for something new and different and riskier. They choke one another. Boys choke girls until they pass out. At a local school the other day a girl with a health problem was choked until she was unconscious. Only the speedy action of paramedics saved her life.

Are boys involved in such ridiculous practices aware of the fact that their prank may lead to a charge of manslaughter? If that should happen, their lives would be ruined forever.

Stay away from pornography

If they want to get involved in pornography, they can do so very easily. They can pick up the phone and dial a number with which they are familiar. They can sit at a computer and revel in cyberspace filth.

I fear this may be going on in some of your homes. It is vicious. It is lewd and filthy. It is enticing and habit forming. It will take a young man or woman down to destruction as surely as anything in this world. It is foul sleaze that makes its exploiters wealthy, its victims impoverished.

I regret to say that many fathers themselves like to hear the siren song of those who peddle filth. Some of them also work the Internet for that which is lewd and lascivious. If there be any man within the sound of my voice who is involved in this or who is moving in this direction, I plead with you to get it out of your life. Get away from it. Stay away

from it. Otherwise it will become an obsession. It will destroy your home life. It will destroy your marriage. It will take the good and beautiful out of your family relationships and replace these with ugliness and suspicion.

To you young men, and to the young women who are your associates, I plead with you not to befoul your minds with this ugly and vicious stuff. It is designed to titillate you, to absorb you into its net. It will take the beautiful out of your life. It will lead you into the dark and ugly.

A recent magazine article contains the story of a 12-year-old girl who got hooked on the Internet. In a chat room she met an admirer. One thing led to another until the discussion became sexually explicit. As she conversed with him, she thought he was a boy of about her own age.

When she met him, she found "a tall, overweight gray-haired man." He was a vicious predator, a scheming pedophile. Her mother, with the help of the FBI, saved her from what might have been a tragedy of the worst kind (see Stephanie Mansfield, "The Avengers Online," *Reader's Digest*, Jan. 2000, 100–104).

Youth need help in resisting temptation

Our youth find this tempting stuff all about them. They need the help of their parents in resisting it. They need a tremendous amount of self-control. They need the strength of good friends. They need prayer to fortify them against this flood tide of filth.

The problem of parental direction of sons and daughters is not new. It is perhaps more acute than it has ever been, but every generation has faced some aspect of it.

The Lord's rebuke of Joseph Smith

In 1833 the Lord Himself rebuked Joseph Smith and his counselors and the Presiding Bishop. To the Prophet Joseph

He said in language clear and unmistakable, as He had said to others:

"You have not kept the commandments, and must needs stand rebuked before the Lord;

"Your family must needs repent and forsake some things, and give more earnest heed unto your sayings, or be removed out of their place" (D&C 93:47–48).

Specifically what brought about these rebukes, I do not know. But I do know that the situation was serious enough and its future fraught with sufficient danger for the Lord Himself to speak with clarity and warning.

Listen, be patient, and be prayerful

I think He likewise speaks to us with clarity and warning. My heart reaches out to our youth, who in many cases must walk a very lonely road. They find themselves in the midst of these evils. I hope they can share their burden with you, their fathers and mothers. I hope that you will listen, that you will be patient and understanding, that you will draw them to you and comfort and sustain them in their loneliness. Pray for direction. Pray for patience. Pray for the strength to love even though the offense may have been serious. Pray for understanding and kindness and, above all, for wisdom and inspiration.

Teach children the ways of the Lord

I believe this to be the most marvelous age in all the history of the world. For some reason you and I have been permitted to come on the scene at this time when there is such a great flowering of knowledge. What a tragedy it is, what a bleak and terrible thing to witness a son or daughter on whom you counted so much walk the tortuous path that leads down to hell. On the other hand, what a glorious and beautiful thing it is to see the child of your dreams walk with head

up, standing tall, unafraid, and with confidence, taking advantage of the tremendous opportunities that open around him or her. Isaiah said, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13).

So lead your sons and daughters, so guide and direct them from the time they are very small, so teach them in the ways of the Lord, that peace will be their companion throughout life.

What to teach sons and daughters

I mentioned to the Relief Society women several specific things that they ought to teach their sons and daughters. I repeat them briefly, perhaps in different language.

The first is to encourage them to develop good friendships. Every boy or girl longs for friends. No one wishes to walk alone. The warmth, the comfort, the camaraderie of a friend mean everything to a boy or girl. That friend can be either an influence for good or an influence for evil. The street gangs which are so vicious are an example of friendships gone awry. Conversely, the association of young people in church and their mingling in school with those of their own kind will lead them to do well and to excel in their endeavors. Open your homes to the friends of your children. If you find they have big appetites, close your eyes and let them eat. Make your children's friends your friends.

Teach them the importance of education. The Lord has enjoined upon this people the responsibility to train their minds that they may be equipped to serve in the society of which they will become a part. The Church will be blessed by reason of their excellence. Furthermore, they will be amply rewarded for the effort they make.

I read from a clipping I made the other day:

"The latest Census information . . . indicated the annual wage for someone

without a degree and no high school diploma stood at little more than \$16,000 nationally [in 1997]. The jump wasn't much higher for a high school diploma—\$22,895 annual average income. As the level of education increases, however, so does the span. The holder of a bachelor's degree earned, on average, \$40,478 that year. Finally, the holder of an advanced degree typically bumped up their annual earnings by more than \$20,000 to a nationwide average of \$63,229, according to [these] Census figures" (Nicole A. Bonham, "Does an Advanced Degree Pay Off?" *Utah Business*, Sept. 2000, 37).

Teach your children self-respect. Teach them that their bodies are the creation of the Almighty. What a miraculous, wonderful, and beautiful thing is the human body.

As has been said here tonight, Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, declared:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

Now comes the craze of tattooing one's body. I cannot understand why any young man—or young woman, for that matter—would wish to undergo the painful process of disfiguring the skin with various multicolored representations of people, animals, and various symbols. With tattoos, the process is permanent unless there is another painful and costly undertaking to remove it. Fathers, caution your sons against having their bodies tattooed. They may resist your talk now, but the time will come when they will thank you. A tattoo is graffiti on the temple of the body.

Likewise the piercing of the body for multiple rings in the ears, in the nose, even in the tongue. Can they possibly think that is beautiful? It is a passing fancy, but its effects can be permanent.

Some have gone to such extremes that the ring had to be removed by surgery. The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve have declared that we discourage tattoos and also "the piercing of the body for other than medical purposes." We do not, however, take any position "on the minimal piercing of the ears by women for one pair of earrings"—one pair.

Teach them to stay away from drugs. That's been spoken of eloquently here. I have already spoken about Ecstasy. Do you wish your children to have the peace of which Isaiah spoke? They will not know peace if they get involved with drugs. These illegal substances will take away their self-control, will seize upon them to a point where they will do anything, within or outside the law, to get another dose.

Teach them the virtue of honesty. There is no substitute under the heavens for the man or woman, the boy or girl who is honest. No false words besmirch his or her reputation. No act of duplicity colors his or her conscience. He or she can walk with head high, standing above the crowd of lesser folk who constantly indulge in lying, cheating, and who excuse themselves with statements that a little lying hurts no one. It does hurt, because small lying leads to large lying, and the prisons of the nation are the best proof of that fact.

Teach them to be virtuous. There is no peace to be had through sexual impurity. Our Heavenly Father placed within us the desires that make us attractive to one another—boys and girls, men and women. But with that urge must be self-discipline, rigid and strong and unbending.

Teach them to look forward to the time when they may be married in the house of the Lord as those who come to the altar free from taint or evil of any kind. They will be grateful all of the days of their lives that they were married in

the temple, worthily, under the authority of the holy priesthood.

Parenthetically, a word to you men.

Watch the tides of your lives, that you do not become enmeshed in situations which lead to sorrow, regret, and, eventually, divorce. Divorce has become so common all around us. There are so many who violate the solemn covenants they have made before God in His holy house.

Brigham Young once said:

"When people are married, instead of trying to get rid of each other, reflect that you have made your choice, and strive to honor and keep it, do not manifest that you have acted unwisely and say that you have made a bad choice, nor let any body know that you think you have. You made your choice, stick to it, and strive to comfort and assist each other" (*Deseret News*, 29 May 1861, 98).

A divorce, when all is said and done, represents a failed marriage.

So many men become chronic critics. Rather, if they would look for the virtues in their wives instead of looking for their failings, love would bloom and the home would be secure.

Teach your children to pray. There is no other resource to compare with prayer. To think that each of us may approach our Father in Heaven, who is the great God of the universe, for individual help and guidance, for strength and faith is a miracle in and of itself. We come to Him by invitation. Let us not shun the opportunity which He has afforded us.

God bless you, dear fathers. May He bless you with wisdom and judgment, with understanding, with self-discipline and self-control, with faith and kindness and love. And may He bless the sons and daughters who have come into your homes, that yours may be a fortifying, strengthening, guiding hand as they walk the treacherous path of life. As the years pass—and they will pass ever so quickly—may you know that "peace . . . which

passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7) as you look upon your sons and daughters, who likewise have known that sacred and wonderful peace. Such is my humble prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Carry On."
Elder H. Bryan Richards offered the benediction.

SUNDAY MORNING SESSION

The fourth session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 8, 2000. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Tabernacle Choir. Craig Jessop directed the choir, and John Longhurst was the organist. To begin the session, the choir sang "The Morning Breaks." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to this, the fourth general session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to those of you who are participating by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of the facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church

who have assembled to worship together in many places.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "The Morning Breaks" and will now favor us with "Sabbath Day." Following the singing, the invocation will be given by Elder James O. Mason of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Sabbath Day."
Elder James O. Mason offered the invocation.

President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "The Lord Is My Shepherd." Following the singing, President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will address us.

The choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

President James E. Faust

Testimony—the cornerstone of my life

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I have lived a long time. As I look back over my life, I recognize one source of singular strength and blessing.

It is my testimony and knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind. I am profoundly grateful that all of my life I have had a simple faith that Jesus is the Christ. That witness has been confirmed to me hun-

dreds of times. It is the crowning knowledge of my soul. It is the spiritual light of my being. It is the cornerstone of my life.

As one of the least among you but in my calling as one of His Apostles, I testify of the Christ as our Savior and the Redeemer of the world. Since this testimony has been forged by a lifetime of experiences, of necessity this requires my relating experiences which are very personal in nature. But this testimony is mine, and I feel that the Savior knows that I know that He lives.

Early experiences confirming testimony

The first cornerstone of my testimony was laid a long time ago. One of my early recollections was having a frightening nightmare as a small child. I still remember it vividly. I must have screamed in fright during the night. My grandmother woke me up. I was crying, and she took me in her arms, hugged me, and comforted me. She got a bowl of some of my favorite rice pudding that was left over from dinner, and I sat on her lap as she spoon-fed me. She told me that we were safe in our house because Jesus was watching over us. I felt it was true then, and I still believe it now. I was comforted in both body and soul and went peacefully back to bed, assured of the divine reality that Jesus does watch over us.

That first memorable experience led to other strong confirmations that God lives and that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. Many of these came in response to earnest prayer. As a child, when I lost things such as my precious pocketknife, I learned that if I prayed hard enough, I could usually find it. I was always able to find the lost cows I was entrusted with. Sometimes I had to pray more than once, but my prayers always seemed to be answered. Sometimes the answer was no, but most often it was positive and confirming. Even when it was no, I came to know that, in the Lord's great wisdom, the answer I received was for my

best good. My faith continued to grow as building blocks were added to the cornerstone, line upon line and precept upon precept. There are far too many of these to be chronicled individually; some are too sacred to utter.

Effects of David Whitmer's testimony

These early seeds of faith sprouted still further when, as a young Aaronic Priesthood boy, I received a firsthand confirmation of the remarkable testimony of the Three Witnesses concerning the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. My stake president was President Henry D. Moyle, and his father was James H. Moyle. In the summertime Brother James H. Moyle would visit his family, and he would worship with us in our little ward in the southeast of the Salt Lake Valley.

One Sunday, Brother James H. Moyle shared with us a singular experience. As a young man he went to the University of Michigan to study law. As he was finishing his studies, his father told him that David Whitmer, one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, was still alive. The father suggested to his son that he stop on his way back to Salt Lake City to visit with David Whitmer face-to-face. Brother Moyle's purpose was to ask him about his testimony concerning the golden plates and the Book of Mormon.

During that visit, Brother Moyle said to David Whitmer: "Sir, you are an old man, and I'm a young man. I have been studying about witnesses and testimonies. Please tell me the truth concerning your testimony as one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon." David Whitmer then told this young man, "Yes, I held the golden plates in my hands, and they were shown to us by an angel. My testimony concerning the Book of Mormon is true." David Whitmer was out of the Church, but he never denied his testimony of the angel's visitation, of handling the golden plates, or of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Hearing with my own ears

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Morning Session

this remarkable experience directly from Brother Moyle's lips had a powerful, confirming effect upon my growing testimony. Having heard it, I felt it was binding upon me.

Testimony strengthened during mission

One of the foundation stones of my testimony came when I served my first mission in Brazil as a young man. At that time our labors were unfruitful and difficult. We could not envision the great outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord that has come in that country and its neighboring countries of South America, Central America, and Mexico in the intervening years. Sixty years ago there was only one stake in all of these countries. Now there are 643 stakes in Latin America. I believe it is only the beginning. What has happened is beyond my wildest hopes and dreams. It is one of the many miracles we have seen. It is my witness that all of this could not have happened without the divine intervention of the Lord, who is watching over this holy work, not only in Latin America but in all of the countries of the world.

Blessings of marriage and children

In my long life I have found peace, joy, and happiness beyond my fondest hopes and dreams. One of the supreme benedictions of my life has been my marriage to an elect daughter of God. I love her with all my heart and soul. Upon the wind of her spirit have my wings been carried.¹ We were married in the Salt Lake Temple 57 years ago when I was a soldier in World War II and did not know if I would come back alive. Her unwavering faith and support have strengthened my own testimony in times of challenge and difficulty. My inevitable eternal journey, if I am so favored, will be wonderful with her at my side.

Another great blessing in my life has been to have children come into our fam-

ily even though we thought we might never have any. Our joy has increased with our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Only by the power of a priesthood blessing did this come about.

Adversity has nurtured testimony

Along with the blessings, however, I have known some difficult challenges and heartaches. I am grateful for the lessons learned in these adversities. As a young man, I lived through the Great Depression, when banks failed and so many lost their jobs and homes and went hungry. I was fortunate to have a job at a canning factory that paid 25 cents an hour. That may have been all I was worth! But it helped me get my education. I served three long years in the military in World War II. One time when we were in peril of our ship capsizing in a horrendous storm in the Pacific, I put myself in the Lord's hands and fervently promised Him that if I survived I would try to serve Him all of the days of my life.

At times I have stumbled and been less than I should have been. All of us experience those wrenching, defining, difficult decisions that move us to a higher level of spirituality. They are the Gethsemanes of our lives that bring with them great pain and anguish. Sometimes they are too sacred to be shared publicly. They are the watershed experiences that help purge us of our unrighteous desires for the things of the world. As the scales of worldliness are taken from our eyes, we see more clearly who we are and what our responsibilities are concerning our divine destiny.

I humbly acknowledge that these many experiences have nurtured a sure knowledge that Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer. I have heard His voice and felt His influence and presence. They have been as a warm, spiritual cloak. The wonder of it is that all who conscientiously strive to keep the commandments and sustain their leaders can receive this

same knowledge in some measure. The privilege of serving in the cause of the Master can bring great satisfaction and inner peace.

Testimonies move the work forward

The united testimonies and faith of the early Church members brought them from Palmyra to Kirtland, and from Nauvoo to the Salt Lake Valley. Eventually that faith will establish this work all over the world. That strength of testimony and faith moves the work of God forward in such a marvelous way. The power of the Lord is in this work, as evidenced in the wonderful happenings of our time.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presides over what is possibly the greatest number of faithful people who have ever lived upon the face of the earth. I testify that he is a truly great prophet. He needs faithful followers. The great strength of this Church comes from our collective and individual testimonies, born of our own trials and faithfulness. The faithfulness of the Saints has permitted this great Conference Center to be built and dedicated in the name of the Lord on this historic day. It is unique in all the world. So wondrous and great are the works of the Lord in our time. As a people, we are not as yet what we ought to be—far from it. However, I hope we will strive harder to become a more righteous people, worthy to continue to receive the blessings of heaven.

Temples are a testimony

The acceleration of temple building in our time has been marvelous. Through the prophetic vision of President Hinckley, we now have many temples that dot many lands on the earth. This remarkable achievement has been made possible because of faithful tithe payers. This in turn has caused the Lord to redeem His promise spoken through Malachi:

“And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”² All of these exquisite holy edifices are a testimony of our belief that the Savior broke the bonds of death and opened up the way for us to enter into covenants which will be binding in another world.

“All things denote there is a God”

Like Alma, I can testify, “All things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.”³

In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith that I know to be true, the Savior testified of Himself in these words:

“I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;

“... I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.”⁴

The Lord has promised that “every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.”⁵

A certain witness

When I was called to the holy apostleship many years ago, my sure witness prompted me to testify on that occasion in these words:

“I understand that a chief requirement for the holy apostleship is to be a personal witness of Jesus as the Christ and the Divine Redeemer. Perhaps on that basis alone, I can qualify. This truth has been made known to me by the unspeakable peace and power of the Spirit of God.”⁶

Since accepting that call many years ago, my certain witness has been greatly magnified. This is because of my undeniable testimony that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

My greatest desire is to be true and faithful to the end of my days on this earth. That we may all do so, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See 2 Nephi 4:25.
2. Malachi 3:10.
3. Alma 30:44.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 93:2-3.

5. Doctrine and Covenants 93:1.

6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1978, 28; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1978, 20.

President Hinckley

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Sister Virginia U. Jensen, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency.

Elder L. Tom Perry

Cleaning the hidden corners of our lives

My mother was a great delegator. Each Saturday morning as my brothers and sisters and I were growing up, we received housecleaning assignments from her. Her instructions to us had been learned from her mother: "Be certain you clean thoroughly in the corners and along the mopboards. If you are going to miss anything, let it be in the center of the room."

She knew very well if we cleaned the corners, she would never have a problem with what was left in the center of the room. That which is visible to the eye would never be left unclean.

Over the years, my mother's counsel has had enormous application to me in many different ways. It is especially applicable to the task of spiritual housecleaning. The aspects of our lives that are on public display usually take care of themselves because we want to leave the best impression possible. But it is in the hidden corners of our lives, where there are things that only we know about, that we must be particularly thorough to ensure that we are clean.

Keep thoughts clean

One of those corners of our lives is in the special attention we give in the area of thoughts. We must continually look out for those idle times when our minds are allowed to wander into territory that should be avoided. In Proverbs we read, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). And Jude has written, "Filthy dreamers defile the flesh" (Jude 1:8).

Inescapably our thoughts shape our lives. James Allen has expressed it this way in his book *As a Man Thinketh*:

"As the plant springs from, and could not be without, the seed, so every act of a man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared without them. This applies equally to those acts called 'spontaneous' and 'unpremeditated' as to those which are deliberately executed. . . .

"In the armoury of thought he forges the weapons by which he destroys himself; he also fashions the tools with which he builds for himself heavenly mansions of joy and strength and peace. . . . Between these two extremes are all the grades of

character, and man is their maker and master. . . . Man is the master of thought, the moulder of character, and the maker and shaper of condition, environment, and destiny" (*As a Man Thinketh* [1983], 7–10).

Then Mr. Allen added: "Let a man radically alter his thoughts, and he will be astonished at the rapid transformation it will effect in the material conditions of his life. Men imagine that thought can be kept secret, but it cannot; it rapidly crystallizes into habit, and habit solidifies into circumstance" (*As a Man Thinketh*, 33–34).

Truly one of the corners we must diligently strive to keep clean is our thoughts. The ideal is to keep our thoughts focused on spiritual things.

Live the gospel in the home

Perhaps another corner that can accumulate dust because of neglect pertains to the earnest direction we give to our families. President Kimball highlighted his concerns in these words:

"Our success, individually and as a Church, will largely be determined by how faithfully we focus on living the gospel in the home. Only as we see clearly the responsibilities of each individual and the role of families and homes can we properly understand that priesthood quorums and auxiliary organizations, even wards and stakes, exist primarily to help members live the gospel in the home. Then we can understand that people are more important than programs, and that Church programs should always support and never detract from gospel-centered family activities. . . .

"All should work together to make home a place where we love to be, a place of listening and learning, a place where each member can find mutual love, support, appreciation, and encouragement.

"I repeat that our success, individually and as a Church, will largely [depend

on] how faithfully we focus on living the gospel in the home" ("Living the Gospel in the Home," *Ensign*, May 1978, 101).

Becoming disciples of Christ

My general counsel to you is that we must create regimens that foster spiritual housecleaning—ongoing and continual processes that draw us closer to the Lord our Savior so that we can be numbered among His disciples.

The central purpose of our mortal probation is to prepare to meet God and inherit the blessings He has promised to His worthy children. The Savior set the pattern during His earthly ministry and encouraged those who followed Him to become His disciples.

The following has been written about discipleship:

"The word *disciple* comes from the Latin [meaning] a learner. A disciple of Christ is one who is learning to be like Christ—learning to think, to feel, and to act as he does. To be a true disciple, to fulfill that learning task, is the most demanding regimen known to man. No other discipline compares . . . in either requirements or rewards. It involves the total transformation of a person from the state of the natural man to that of [a] saint, one who loves the Lord and serves with all of his heart, might, mind, and strength" (Chauncey C. Riddle, "Becoming a Disciple," *Ensign*, Sept. 1974, 81).

The Savior instructed those who would follow Him about the essence of discipleship when He said:

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.

"And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:25–26; see footnote *d* for Matthew 16:24 in the LDS edition of the King James Bible).

"Break not my commandments for to save your lives; for whosoever will save his life in this world, shall lose it in the world to come.

"And whosoever will lose his life in this world, for my sake, shall find it in the world to come.

"Therefore, forsake the world, and save your souls" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:27-29, in Bible appendix).

When the spirit conquers the flesh, the flesh becomes a servant instead of the master. When we have cleaned out the corners of worldliness and are ready to be obedient to the Lord, then we are able to receive His word and keep His commandments.

Conversion of Alma the Younger

A dramatic change occurs in the lives of individuals when they dedicate themselves to becoming disciples of the Lord. One of the most vivid examples I can think of from the scriptures is the conversion of young Alma and the change that occurred in his very countenance as he became a disciple of the Lord. Remember, Alma and the sons of Mosiah were numbered among the unbelievers. Alma was a man of many words and could speak much flattery to the people. He led the people to do all manner of iniquity. He became a great hinderment to the Church, stealing away the hearts of the people and causing much dissension among them. (See Mosiah 27:8-9.)

But due to the humble supplications of his father, an angel appeared to them as they were going about their mischief. Alma was so astonished that he fell to the earth, and the angel commanded him: "Alma, arise and stand forth, for why persecutest thou the church of God? For the Lord hath said: This is my church, and I will establish it; and nothing shall overthrow it, save it is the transgression of my people" (Mosiah 27:13). He was

so weak he could not lift his limbs and had to be carried. He was also dumb. He was brought and placed before his father. His father rejoiced and called upon the people to pray for his son. (See Mosiah 27:18-22.)

"And it came to pass after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort:

"For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit" (Mosiah 27:23-24).

Then he recounted the great tribulation and suffering he went through as he realized he was cast off from the kingdom of God. He remembered the teachings of his father and cried unto the Lord that he might be spared. (See Mosiah 27:27-29; Alma 36:16-18.)

Now we see the dramatic change as he becomes a disciple of our Redeemer:

"And now it came to pass that Alma began from this time forward to teach the people, and those who were with Alma at the time the angel appeared unto them, traveling round about through all the land, publishing to all the people the things which they had heard and seen, and preaching the word of God in much tribulation" (Mosiah 27:32).

Ancestors show true discipleship

In my family's pioneer history there are many accounts of noble souls who demonstrated the traits of true discipleship. My children's great-grandfather was a valiant disciple of Jesus Christ. His family were wealthy landowners in Denmark. As the favored son, he was to inherit the land of his father. He fell in love with a beautiful young woman who was not of the same social standing as his family. He was encouraged not to pursue the relationship. He was not inclined to

follow his family's counsel, and on one of his visits to see her he discovered that all of her family had joined the Church. He refused to listen to the doctrine her family had embraced and forcefully told her that she had to choose between him and the Church. She boldly declared that she would not give up her religion.

With that forceful pronouncement, he decided he should listen to the teachings that were so important to her. Soon after, he was touched by the Spirit and he too became converted to the gospel. But when he informed his parents of his decision to join the Church and marry this young woman, they were angry with him and forced him to decide between his family and their wealth and the Church. He walked away from the comforts he had known all of his life, joined the Church, and married her.

Immediately, they started to prepare to leave Denmark and journey to Zion. Now without the support of his family, he had to work hard at any employment he could find to save for the journey to the new land. After a year of hard labor, he had saved enough for their passage. As soon as they were prepared to leave, their branch president came to them and said there was a family with greater need than he and his wife. He was asked to give up what he had saved so the needy family could go to Zion.

Discipleship requires sacrifice. They gave up their savings to the needy family, and then they began another year of hard labor to save to finance their journey. Eventually they arrived in Zion, but not before they had made many more sacrifices, showing true discipleship.

Earnestly do spiritual housecleaning

A rich young man was given the harshest test of discipleship when he was told, "Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, . . . come, follow me" (Luke 18:22).

For many of us an equally challenging test is to shed our bad habits and worldly thoughts so that we are unconflicted and uncompromised in our devotion to the Lord's service.

As true disciples of Christ, may our lives reflect His example. May we take upon ourselves His name and stand as witnesses of Him at all times and in all places (see Mosiah 18:9).

Moreover, may God bless us that we will earnestly desire to do our spiritual housecleaning, getting into all the corners, cleaning out all those things that would diminish us as disciples of the Lord, so that we can move forward in our service to Him who is our King and Savior, I humbly pray in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

Sister Virginia U. Jensen

Light of Christ sustains Joshua Dennis

When he was just 10 years old, Joshua Dennis spent five days trapped in the pitch-black darkness of an abandoned mine. When rescuers finally heard his faint cry for help and pulled him out of the horrible darkness, he was disoriented, cold, and exhausted. But much to their surprise, he wasn't afraid. Josh spent his time sleeping, yelling for help, and pray-

ing. "Someone was protecting me," he explained. "I knew people were going to find me."

Joshua's simple but profound faith had been nurtured by his parents, who taught him that he had a Heavenly Father who knew where he was at all times. They taught him he had been born with the Light of Christ within him. Truly, Josh had been brought up in light and truth (see D&C 93:40) so that when he found

himself huddled on a ledge 2,000 feet deep in a mine, he had drawn upon that light to sustain and comfort him, to give him courage and hope. Josh experienced what Abinadi taught when, speaking of Christ, he said, "He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened" (Mosiah 16:9).

Displays of light at the Savior's birth

How fitting that the Savior's birth in Bethlehem was accompanied by miraculous displays of light in the Western Hemisphere. At the time of His birth, "at the going down of the sun there was no darkness; and the people began to be astonished because . . . there was no darkness in all that night" (3 Nephi 1:15, 19). This celebration of light stood in stark contrast to that which occurred at His Crucifixion, when "there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land, inasmuch that the inhabitants thereof . . . could feel the vapor of darkness" (3 Nephi 8:20; see also verses 21–23).

Jesus' light can quench any darkness

There are all kinds of darkness in this world: darkness that comes from sin; darkness that comes from discouragement, disappointment, and despair; darkness that comes from loneliness and feelings of inadequacy. Just as the light that burned in Josh Dennis's heart was stronger than the suffocating darkness that engulfed him, the light of Jesus Christ is stronger than any darkness we face in this life, *if* we have faith in Him, seek after Him, and obey Him. For as the Lord revealed through the Prophet Joseph, "If your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you" (D&C 88:67).

Christ's light and the gospel message of light and salvation can be darkened in our own lives only by our disobedience

and lack of faith. In like manner the Savior's light *increases* in our lives as we keep the commandments and strive continually to be like Him. For "that which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter" (D&C 50:24).

As the light of Jesus Christ and His gospel grows brighter within our countenances and our hearts, it becomes easier for us to discern what is truly valuable from the counterfeits the world offers. Knowledge that Christ loved us enough to willingly bear the weight of our sins removes the need for pride and an unwarranted trust in the arm of flesh. Belief that the Atonement restores to us all we lose to sin and missteps along life's path creates a hope greater than any temporal pleasure or momentary mortal thrill.

Consider the experience of King Lamoni. Though he had unfettered power, great earthly treasures, and servants to wait on him hand and foot, he lived in spiritual darkness. When he was willing to permit Ammon to teach him the gospel, a most remarkable thing occurred: Lamoni "fell unto the earth, as if he were dead" (Alma 18:42). "Ammon . . . knew that king Lamoni was under the power of God; he knew that the dark veil of unbelief was being cast away from his mind, and the light which did light up his mind, . . . was the light of the glory of God, . . . yea, this light had infused such joy into his soul" (Alma 19:6).

Only the glory of God and the light of life everlasting produce a joy profound enough to overwhelm one completely and to eliminate "the dark veil of unbelief."

"Lead, kindly Light"

Throughout the scriptures, and even in the writings of thoughtful Christians through the centuries, we find examples

of how Christ's message of light and salvation can spiritually and physically sustain us. As a young priest traveling in Italy in 1833, Englishman John Henry Newman encountered emotional and physical darkness when illness detained him there for several weeks. He became deeply discouraged, and a nurse who saw his tears asked what troubled him. All he could reply was that he was sure God had work for him to do in England. Aching to return home, he finally found passage on a small boat.

Not long after the ship set sail, thick fog descended and obscured the hazardous cliffs surrounding them. Trapped for a week in the damp, gray darkness, the ship unable to travel forward or back, Newman pleaded for his Savior's help as he penned the words we now know as the hymn "Lead, Kindly Light."

Lead, kindly Light, amid th' encircling gloom; . . .
The night is dark, and I am far from home; . . .
Keep thou my feet; . . .
one step enough for me.
[*Hymns*, no. 97]

This hymn echoes a truth our hearts confirm: though trials may extinguish other sources of light, Christ will illuminate our path, "keep our feet," and show us the way home. For as the Savior has promised, "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness" (John 8:12).

Embrace the Savior's light

We can all find ourselves in places of darkness from time to time. We may wander into dark, spiritual caverns when we make foolish choices, admit harmful influences into our lives, or turn away from the light of the gospel to embrace the world just a little longer. It may seem harmless at first—just a little exploring, that's all. Before we know it, we become separated

from the light and left in darkness alone. Why do we remain in darkness when such rescuing light awaits us? Let us bask in the warm and illuminating light provided by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let the Savior's kindly light lead us one step at a time. Let covenants and commandments keep us safe as we follow the gospel pathway to our heavenly home.

Remember little Josh Dennis? He is now Elder Dennis, serving a mission far away from the dark mine which held him captive. Now Elder Dennis finds his way along the narrow, unfamiliar paths of Honduras, sharing a message of hope, salvation, and light. What he teaches every day is the paradox he experienced as a young boy lost in a mine: that amidst encircling gloom, amidst the darkest possible circumstances, it is possible to feel hope, peace, and comfort—all because of the light which is stronger than all darkness, the light of Jesus Christ.

I know from my own experience, just as surely as Josh knows from his, of the reality of that marvelous being of light—our Savior. May we embrace His light and live so that it will illuminate our path and lead us to our heavenly home, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you very much for your inspirational remarks. Elder L. Tom Perry has spoken to us, followed by Sister Virginia U. Jensen of the Relief Society general presidency.

The choir and congregation will now stand and sing "High on the Mountain Top." Following the singing, President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "High on the Mountain Top."

President Thomas S. Monson

Dedication day

A favorite hymn describes the tender feelings of my heart and soul this beautiful day of dedication. I think the words will describe your feelings also:

On this day of joy and gladness,
Lord, we praise thy holy name;
In this sacred place of worship,
We thy glories loud proclaim!
... Bright and clear our voices ring,
Singing songs of exultation
To our Maker, Lord, and King!¹

Charles C. Rich, on April 7, 1863, spoke of the need for a tabernacle in which to meet. He declared:

"What shall I say in regard to the Tabernacle? We can see at once that we . . . need the blessings of such a house at the present time. If we put it off, when will it be built? When that house is built we can then enjoy the benefits and blessings which it will afford. The same principle may be applied to everything we take in hand, and with which we have to do, whether it be to build a Temple, a Tabernacle, to send teams to the frontiers to gather the poor, or to do any other work that is required of us. Nothing that is required will be performed until we go to work and do something ourselves. We have no other people to lean upon, and therefore it remains for us to go to work and perform well our part."²

They went to work!

Thanks be to God for our noble prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, who, with the foresight of a seer, recognized the need for this magnificent facility and, with the help of many others, "went to work." The result is before us today and will be dedicated this morning.

Rededicate our lives

As a symbol of our gratitude, as an expression of our love for the Lord, could

we not rededicate our lives and our homes in a like manner?

The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, added an apostolic dimension to our building commitment when he declared, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"³

The need for personal dedication and recommitment is essential in today's society. Just a hurried glance at several newspaper stories describes our plight.

From the Associated Press came the following: "In the name of free speech, the Supreme Court struck down a federal law that shielded children from sex-oriented cable TV channels."⁴

From the *San Jose Mercury News* came this story: "Germany may be the economic engine of Europe, but on Sundays it stops. . . . But global market forces are beginning to disturb Germany's traditional day of rest. With . . . American-style [7-day-a-week] shopping [already being offered], and the Internet providing 24-hour access to the world's goods, such rigid store regulations 'are like a castle from the old century.' . . . To vie with other world-class cities, Berlin must be more aggressive. . . . 'We want to make more money.'"⁵

As we view the disillusionment that engulfs countless thousands today, we are learning the hard way what an ancient prophet wrote out for us 3,000 years ago: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase."⁶

The revered Abraham Lincoln accurately described our plight: "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power. . . . But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and

multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us."⁷

The family is a refuge of safety

When the seas of life are stormy, a wise mariner seeks a port of peace. The family, as we have traditionally known it, is such a refuge of safety. "The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions."⁸ Actually, a home is much more than a house. A house is built of lumber, brick, and stone. A home is made of love, sacrifice, and respect. A house can be a home, and a home can be a heaven when it shelters a family. When true values and basic virtues undergird the families of society, hope will conquer despair, and faith will triumph over doubt.

Such values, when learned and lived in our families, will be as welcome rain to parched soil. Love will be engendered; loyalty to one's best self will be enhanced; and those virtues of character, integrity, and goodness will be fostered. The family must hold its preeminent place in our way of life because it's the only possible base upon which a society of responsible human beings has ever found it practicable to build for the future and maintain the values they cherish in the present.

Happy homes come in a variety of appearances. Some feature families with father, mother, brothers, and sisters living together in a spirit of love. Others consist of a single parent with one or two children, while other homes have but one occupant. There are, however, identifying features which are to be found in a happy home, whatever the number or

description of its family members. These identifying features are:

- A pattern of prayer.
- A library of learning.
- A legacy of love.

A pattern of prayer

On the American continent, Jacob, the brother of Nephi, declared, "Look unto God with firmness of mind, and pray unto him with exceeding faith."⁹

A prominent judge was asked what we, as citizens of the countries of the world, could do to reduce crime and disobedience to law and to bring peace and contentment into our lives and our nations. He thoughtfully replied, "I would suggest a return to the old-fashioned practice of family prayer."

A library of learning

Concerning making our personal lives and our homes libraries of learning, the Lord counseled, "Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith."¹⁰

The standard works offer the library of learning of which I speak. We must be careful not to underestimate the capacity of children to read and to understand the word of God.

As parents, we should remember that our lives may be the book from the family library which the children most treasure. Are our examples worthy of emulation? Do we live in such a way that a son or a daughter may say, "I want to follow my dad" or "I want to be like my mother"? Unlike the book on the library shelf, the covers of which shield its contents, our lives cannot be closed. Parents, we truly are an open book in the library of learning of our homes.

A legacy of love

Next, do we exemplify the legacy of love? Do our homes? Bernadine Healy, in

a commencement address, gave this counsel: "As a physician, who has been deeply privileged to share the most profound moments of people's lives including their final moments, let me tell you a secret. People facing death don't think about what degrees they have earned, what positions they have held, or how much wealth they have accumulated. At the end, what really matters is who you loved and who loved you. That circle of love is everything, and is a good measure of a past life. It is the gift of greatest worth."¹¹

Our Lord and Savior's message was one of love. It can be as a light to our personal pathway to exaltation.

Near the end of his life, one father looked back on how he had spent his time on earth. An acclaimed, respected author of numerous scholarly works, he said, "I wish I had written one less book and taken my children fishing more often."

Time passes quickly. Many parents say that it seems like yesterday that their children were born. Now those children are grown, perhaps with children of their own. "Where did the years go?" they ask. We cannot call back time that is past, we cannot stop time that now is, and we cannot experience the future in our present state. Time is a gift, a treasure not to be put aside for the future but to be used wisely in the present.

Have we cultivated a spirit of love in our homes? Observed President David O. McKay, "A true Mormon home is one in which if Christ should chance to enter, he would be pleased to linger and to rest."¹²

What are we doing to ensure that our homes meet this description? Do we ourselves meet it?

Come home to the gospel of Jesus Christ

On the journey along the pathway of life, there are casualties. Some depart from the road markers which lead to life eternal, only to discover that the detour

chosen ultimately leads to a dead end. Indifference, carelessness, selfishness, and sin all take their costly toll in human lives. There are those who, for unexplained reasons, march to the sound of a different drummer, later to learn they have followed the Pied Piper of sorrow and suffering.

Today there goes forth from this pulpit an invitation to people throughout the world: Come from your wandering way, weary traveler. Come to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Come to that heavenly haven called home. Here you will discover the truth. Here you will learn the reality of the Godhead, the comfort of the plan of salvation, the sanctity of the marriage covenant, the power of personal prayer. Come home.

Sound of a bell helps a man find home

From our youth, many of us may remember the story of a very young boy who was abducted from his parents and his home and taken to a village situated far away. Under these conditions, the small boy grew to young manhood without a knowledge of his actual parents or earthly home.

But where was home to be found? Where were his mother and father to be discovered? Oh, if only he could remember even their names, his task would be less hopeless. Desperately he sought to recall even a glimpse of his childhood.

Like a flash of inspiration, he remembered the sound of a bell which from the tower atop the village church pealed its welcome each Sabbath morning. From village to village the young man wandered, ever listening for that familiar bell to chime. Some bells were similar, others far different from the sound he remembered.

At length the weary young man stood one Sunday morning before a church of a typical town. He listened carefully as the bell began to peal. The sound was famil-

iar. It was unlike any other he had heard, save that bell which pealed in the memory of his childhood days. Yes, it was the same bell. Its ring was true. His eyes filled with tears. His heart rejoiced in gladness. His soul overflowed with gratitude. The young man dropped to his knees, looked upward beyond the bell tower—even toward heaven—and in a prayer of gratitude whispered, "Thanks be to God, I'm home."

The gospel rings true and leads us home

Like the peal of a remembered bell will be the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the soul of him who earnestly seeks. Many of you have traveled long in a personal quest for that which rings true. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sends forth to you an earnest appeal: Open your doors to the missionaries. Open your minds to the word of God. Open your hearts—even your very souls—to the sound of that still, small voice which testifies of truth. As the prophet Isaiah promised, "Thine ears shall hear a word . . . , saying, This is the way, walk ye in it."¹³ Then, like the boy of whom I've spoken, you too will, on bended knee, say to your God and mine, "I'm home."

May such be the blessing of all, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "On This Day of Joy and Gladness," *Hymns*, no. 64.
2. *Deseret News*, 20 May 1863, 369.
3. 1 Corinthians 3:16.
4. Richard Carelli, "High Court Kills Limits on TV Sex," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 May 2000, A1.
5. Daniel Rubin, "Global Economy Erodes Ban on Sunday Shopping," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 May 2000, A1.
6. Ecclesiastes 5:10.
7. In James D. Richardson, comp., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, 10 vols. (1896–99), 5:3366.
8. First Presidency letter, 11 Feb. 1999, cited in *Church News*, 27 Feb. 1999, 3.
9. Jacob 3:1.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.
11. "On Light and Worth: Lessons from Medicine," commencement address, Vassar College, 29 May 1994, 10, Special Collections.
12. In Conference Report, Oct. 1947, 120.
13. Isaiah 30:21.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

As you leave the conference this morning, we ask you to drive with caution, obey traffic rules, and be courteous in every way. There are many of us here, and we want you to have a good experience when you leave this building.

We express our appreciation to all who have addressed us and to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music.

It will now be my opportunity to speak to you and then offer the dedicatory prayer.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

My brothers and sisters, what a great inspiration you are. As I look into the faces of this vast congregation and realize that there are many more assembled across the world, I am overwhelmed with a great sense of love for each of you. What wonderful people you are. I pray that the Holy Spirit may guide me as I speak to you.

Symbolism of the cornerstone

Before coming into the building this morning, we sealed the cover stone of the cornerstone of the structure, this great new structure. That marks the completion of this building.

We preserve the symbolism of the cornerstone in remembrance of the Son of God, upon whose life and mission this Church is established. He, and He alone, is the Chief Cornerstone. There is built upon Him a strong foundation of apostles and prophets and, above this, "all the building fitly framed together" to constitute The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Ephesians 2:21; see also verse 20).

As I reminded the group at the cornerstone this morning, let this symbol be recognized as representing the Redeemer of the world, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name this Church carries.

A remarkable year for the Church

I am so grateful that this building is now complete. We occupied it for our April conference and on one other occasion last June. It was not entirely finished then. It is now declared complete with a permanent occupancy permit.

This millennial year of 2000 has been a remarkable year for the Church. We have expanded on every front across the world. We have passed the 11 million

membership mark. What a significant thing that is.

I was around in 1947, when the Church celebrated the centennial of the arrival of the pioneers. At that time, the This Is the Place Monument was dedicated. A great celebration was held with a pageant in the Tabernacle representing the worldwide mission of the Church. The grand theme running through all of this was that the Church had reached a million members in its growth. Approximately one-half of them lived in Utah. Now only about 15 percent live here, and yet we have more members here than we have ever had. To think that today we have a membership of 11 million is a tremendous and wonderful thing that brings with it the promise of the future.

We have reached out across the world, wherever we are permitted to go. We have taught the gospel as revealed in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. We are now going into areas whose names were seldom heard back in 1947. Our missionary work has expanded in a miraculous manner.

A vast family of brothers and sisters

I think I have been in most of the places where the Church is organized. I have found wonderful people everywhere. They are Latter-day Saints in the truest sense of the word. They are seeking to live the commandments.

As I have met with them and talked with them, I have learned the real meaning of the words of Paul:

"And [God] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find

him, though he be not far from every one of us:

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; . . . For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:26-28).

We have become a great cosmopolitan society, a vast family of brothers and sisters in the Lord. In the movement of this great concourse of men and women, boys and girls, all Saints of the Most High, we sing as we march forward:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the
coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where
the grapes of wrath are stored.
He hath loosed the fateful lightning
of his terrible, swift sword;
His truth is marching on.
["Battle Hymn of the Republic,"
Hymns, no. 60]

This work is possessed of a vitality which has never been evidenced before to such a degree.

Growth in education

In the field of education, we have established the seminary and institute program wherever the Church has gone. It is touching for good the lives of students across the world. In the institutes young college-age students find happy association; they find learning, social experience, and even husbands and wives within the faith.

In the past few months we have announced that Ricks College, a great pioneer educational institution, hitherto providing a two-year degree, will be expanded to provide four years of education and will carry the name BYU—Idaho. This in no way disparages the name of the great man for whom the school was named. This will enlarge the educational opportunities for many young men and women. It will make of what has been a great school an even greater one. It is

an effort on the part of the Church to extend the opportunity of secular education within the framework of a Church school, where is taught faith in the living God and in His divine Son, our Lord.

Growth in temple building

Another item of remarkable consequence, emphasized in this millennial year, is the building of temples. It has been a miracle. Last Sunday we dedicated in Boston, Massachusetts, the 100th working temple of the Church.

I came into the First Presidency in July of 1981 as a counselor to President Kimball. Since that time, 81 of these 100 temples have been dedicated. Only 19 were operating before then.

Fifty-three new temples, more than half of the 100 now in operation, have been dedicated since I was ordained President of the Church five years ago. I mention this only to remind you of the acceleration of this dramatic expansion.

When I announced in conference that I hoped we would see the dedication of the 100th operating temple before the end of the year 2000, I wondered if it were possible. I cannot say enough of thanks to the many men and women who have worked so long and so hard to bring this miracle to pass. Some of these new temples are smaller. But every ordinance that can be performed in the Salt Lake Temple, the largest in the Church, can be performed in these smaller temples. They are devoted exclusively to ordinance work. They are beautiful structures, well built in every respect. And they have made possible a much easier journey to the house of the Lord for thousands upon thousands of our people.

We shall go on building them. We will dedicate three more before the end of the year. We will continue to build in the future, perhaps not at the scale we have worked on during the past year, but there

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will be a steady construction of these sacred houses to accommodate the needs of the people.

How deeply grateful are our people. I hope and believe that the Lord is pleased.

The Conference Center

And now today, as another significant accomplishment of this millennial year, we dedicate this great Conference Center. It is a unique and remarkable building. When it was first envisioned and planned, we were not concerned with building the largest house of worship to be found anywhere. We were concerned with a plan to accommodate the needs of our people.

The Tabernacle, which has served us so well for more than a century, simply became inadequate for our needs.

It was a great and serious thing to undertake the building of this structure. We were, of course, aware of all of the electronic means for carrying far and wide the message spoken from the pulpit. However, we were also aware of the desire of so very many to sit in the same hall with the speaker, as evidenced this morning. As I said when announcing the decision to move forward:

"The building of this structure has been a bold undertaking. We worried about it. . . . We listened for the whisperings of the Spirit [as we prayed about] it. And only when we felt the confirming voice of the Lord did we determine to go forward" (in Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 3; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 4-5).

Announcement of our decision was made in the April 1996 general conference. I said on that occasion:

"I regret that many who wish to meet with us in the Tabernacle this morning are unable to get in. There are very many out on the grounds. . . .

"My heart reaches out to those who wish[ed] to get in and could not be accommodated. About a year ago I suggested to the Brethren that perhaps the

time has come when we should study the feasibility of constructing another dedicated house of worship on a much larger scale that would accommodate three or four times the number who can be seated in this building" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1996, 88-89; or *Ensign*, May 1996, 65).

It was a little more than a year later when ground was broken. This occurred on the 24th of July, 1997, the 150th anniversary of the arrival of our forebears in this valley.

At the conclusion of the groundbreaking services, President Packer offered the benediction. In that prayer, he asked the Lord that He might preserve my life to be present for the dedication of the new building. I am grateful for the evident answer to that request.

Today we shall dedicate it as a house in which to worship God the Eternal Father and His Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We hope and we pray that there will continue to go forth to the world from this pulpit declarations of testimony and doctrine, of faith in the living God, and of gratitude for the great atoning sacrifice of our Redeemer.

We will also dedicate it as a house in which artistic performances of a dignified nature will be presented.

Here this glorious Tabernacle Choir will sing anthems of praise. Here other musical groups will perform for the entertaining of large numbers of people. Here will be presented pageants depicting in a beautiful and artistic way the history of this movement, as well as many other things.

This structure has been built of the finest materials by the ablest of craftsmen. We are indebted to all who have contributed to make of this a magnificent center for conferences of the Church and other purposes.

We anticipate that there will be requests from other groups to use this hall. We will make it available under regula-

tions that will ensure that its use will be in harmony with the purposes for which it will be dedicated today.

It is not a museum piece, although the architecture is superb. It is a place to be used in honor to the Almighty and for the accomplishment of His eternal purposes.

I am so grateful that we have it. I am so grateful that it is completed. There is a little work of tuning up the organ, which will go on for some time. I commend to your attention the excellent articles appearing in the October *Ensign* dealing with this subject.

"All nations shall flow unto it"

As I contemplate this marvelous structure adjacent to the temple, there comes to mind the great prophetic utterance of Isaiah:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. . . .

"O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord" (Isaiah 2:2-3, 5).

I believe that prophecy applies to the historic and wonderful Salt Lake Temple. But I believe also that it is related to this magnificent hall. For it is from this pulpit that the law of God shall go forth, together with the word and testimony of the Lord.

May God bless us as a people. We have found a new stride in this great millennial year. May we walk in the footsteps of the great Jehovah, the God of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. May we walk in the light of Him who was the Messiah of the world, the Son of God, who said of Himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6), is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Instruction on the Hosanna Shout

Now, my brothers and sisters, in a moment I shall offer the dedicatory prayer, in which all of you are invited to join. Immediately at the close of the dedicatory prayer, we invite each one of you who may wish to participate to stand and join with us in the Hosanna Shout. This sacred salute to the Father and the Son is given at the dedication of each of the temples. It has also been given on a few occasions of historic importance, such as the laying of the capstone on the Salt Lake Temple and the celebration of the centennial of the Church in the 1930 general conference. We feel it is appropriate to give the shout here, as we dedicate this great building, the likes of which we may never undertake again. Any mention of this by the media should recognize that for us this is a very sacred and personal thing. We request that it be treated with deference and respect.

I will now demonstrate the shout. Each one takes a clean white handkerchief, holding it by one corner, and waves it while saying in unison, "Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna to God and the Lamb," repeated three times, followed by "Amen, Amen, and Amen."

Again, those wishing to participate are invited to stand and give the Hosanna Shout immediately following the dedicatory prayer. Those desiring to remain seated are at liberty to do so. If you do not have a white handkerchief, you may simply wave your hand. Those in other areas may join in giving the shout if their circumstances are appropriate.

At the conclusion of the shout, the Tabernacle Choir, without announcement, will sing the "Hosannah Anthem," which was written by Evan Stephens for the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple in 1893. On a signal from the conductor, the congregation will join in singing "The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning," which was written by W. W. Phelps and sung at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836.

The benediction will then be offered by Elder W. Don Ladd of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

Now, my beloved brethren and sisters, if you will bow your heads and close your eyes, we will join in a prayer of dedication.

Dedicatory prayer

O God, our Eternal Father, with thankful hearts we approach Thee in prayer on this historic Sabbath when we dedicate this magnificent Conference Center.

It has been erected to Thine honor and Thy glory. It is another in a complex of great structures dedicated to the accomplishment of Thy purposes and the enrolling of Thy work. It is neighbor to the sacred temple which our forebears labored in building over a period of 40 years. It looks upon the historic Tabernacle, which has served Thy people so well for more than a century of time. Nearby is the Assembly Hall, whose uses are many and varied.

Not far away are the Church Office Building, the Administration Building, and the Joseph Smith Memorial Building. Also nearby are the Lion House and the Beehive House, both of which are historic in character. In the other direction are the Museum of Church History and Art and the Family History Library.

This great new structure overlooks them all and complements their variety,

utility, and beauty. Together they become a testimony of the strength and vitality of Thy work, the headquarters of Thy Church, and the fountain from which truth rolls forth to fill the earth.

We thank Thee for the very many dedicated and highly skilled men and women who have worked long and hard to bring it to completion. May they have a sense of pride in their accomplishment.

As we are assembled in this great general conference of Thy Church, with these services carried to people across the earth, we bow our heads in reverence before Thee.

Acting in the authority of the holy priesthood, which comes from Thee, and in the name of Thine Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, we dedicate and consecrate this, the Conference Center of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We dedicate it unto Thee, our Father and our God, and unto Thy Beloved Son, our Redeemer, whose name Thy Church bears.

We dedicate it as a gathering place for Thy people, where they may assemble to hear the word of the Lord as it is spoken by Thy servants who stand as prophets, seers, and revelators and as witnesses unto the world of the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose name is the only name given among men whereby they may be saved.

We dedicate it from the footings on which it rests to the top of its tower. We dedicate this magnificent hall, unique in its design and size, constructed to house the thousands who through the years will gather here to worship Thee and to be entertained in a wholesome and wonderful way.

From this pulpit may Thy name be spoken with reverence and love. May the name of Thy Son be constantly remembered with sacred declaration. May testimony of Thy divine work ring forth from here to all the world. May righteousness

be proclaimed and evil denounced. May words of faith be spoken with boldness and conviction. May proclamations and declarations of doctrine ring forth to the nations.

Though the earth tremble, may this magnificent edifice stand solid and safe under Thy watchful care. May no evil voice ever be lifted in this hall in derogation of Thee, of Thy Son, of Thy restored Church, or of its prophets and leaders who have presided through the years. Protect it from the storms of nature and the desecrating hand of the vandal and destroyer. Preserve it from conflict and acts of terrorism. May all who pass this way, whatever their religious persuasion, look upon this structure with respect and admiration.

May this great hall be a place of dignified entertainment, a home to those arts which are uplifting and which amplify the culture of the people. May there never be anything presented here which is lacking in dignity and which does not portray that beauty which is of Thy divine nature.

We dedicate the great organ, the beautiful halls and other rooms, the parking area, and all other features and facilities pertaining to this structure. May it be a thing of beauty to the beholder both inside and out. May it be a house of many uses, a house of culture, a house of art, a house of worship, a house of faith, a house of God.

May it give expression to the declaration of Thy people that "if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (Articles of Faith 1:13).

Now Father, as we dedicate this Conference Center, we also dedicate the theater which adjoins it. It is a beautiful structure, designed to serve as a meeting place, as a home for the performing arts, and for a variety of uses, all dignified and created to cultivate the beautiful and en-

nobling. Protect it and bless it as we have prayed concerning the Conference Center.

We likewise on this day dedicate the parking facility built under Main Street and all the improvements made to the area immediately in the front of the house of the Lord, the temple of our God.

May this area be looked upon as a place of peace, an oasis in the midst of this bustling city. May it be a place where the weary may sit and contemplate the things of God and the beauties of nature. It is adorned with trees and shrubs, flowers and water, all combined to create an island of quiet beauty in the midst of this great thriving community. May the desire of the people of Thy Church to improve and beautify this area be appreciated by all who pass this way.

We pray that favorable expressions may prevail and grow until there is universal acceptance and appreciation for what has been done. We invoke Thy blessings upon this community and this state. This is the area to which Thy people came seeking asylum from the oppression they had known. Now this has become a great cosmopolitan society to which people from all over the nation and the entire world have gathered. May all who live here and all who come here recognize a community environment that is unique and attractive. May we of Thy Church be hospitable and gracious. May we maintain the standards and practices for which we are known and accord to others the privilege of worshiping who, "where, or what they may" (Articles of Faith 1:11).

Bless us to reach out as good neighbors and be helpful to all. May we lift up the hands and strengthen the faltering knees of any in distress. May we all live together in peace with appreciation and respect one for another.

Almighty God, how thankful we are for Thy wondrous blessings upon us. Ac-

cept of our gratitude. Keep Thine ancient promises concerning those who contribute their tithes and offerings, which have made all of this possible. Open the windows of heaven and shower down blessings upon them.

We love Thee and Thy divine Son. We seek to do Thy will. We praise Thy holy name. We lift our voices in anthems of worship. We testify of Thee and of our Redeemer, Thy matchless Son. Majestic is Thy way, glorious the tapestry of Thine eternal plan for all who walk in obedience unto Thee.

Wilt Thou smile with favor upon us, we pray in the sacred name of our Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The congregation participated in the Hosanna Shout. The choir then sang the "Hosannah Anthem," with the congregation joining in singing "The Spirit of God."

Elder W. Don Ladd offered the benediction.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Conference Center at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 8, 2000. This session was conducted by President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music for this session. Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford directed the choir, and Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

President James E. Faust

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 170th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, the Internet, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop and Barlow Bradford, with Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ. The choir will open these services by singing "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Gordon T. Watts of the Seventy.

The choir sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty."

Elder Gordon T. Watts offered the invocation.

President Faust

The choir will now sing "I Need Thee Every Hour." Following the singing, President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, will be our first speaker.

The choir sang "I Need Thee Every Hour."

President Boyd K. Packer

Speaking plainly to youth

I respond to a prompting I have had for a very long time to speak to the youth of the Church, who face challenges unknown to us in our youth.

President J. Reuben Clark described our youth as "hungry for things of the spirit; they are eager to learn the Gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted.

"They want to know about . . . our beliefs; they want to gain testimonies of their truth; they are not now doubters but inquirers, seekers after truth. . . .

" . . . You do not have to sneak up behind [these] spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in [their] ears; you can come right out, face to face, and talk with [them] . . . ; you can bring these truths to [them] openly. . . . Youth may prove to be not more fearful of them than you are. There is no need for gradual approaches" ("The Charted Course of the Church in Education" [address to Church educators, 8 Aug. 1938]; in Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently*, rev. ed. [1991], 365, 373-74).

I agree with President Clark and will speak plainly to the youth about things I have learned and know to be true.

Patriarchal blessing's counsel about body

When I was 18, I was called into military service. I had not received my patriarchal blessing, so the bishop recommended me to a patriarch near the air base.

Patriarch J. Roland Sandstrom of the Santa Ana California Stake gave me my blessing. In it I was told this:

"You made a free and willing decision to abide by the laws of Eternal Progress as outlined by our elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. You . . . have been . . . given a physical body with which you might experience Earth Life, . . . a body of such physical proportions and fitness as to enable your spirit to function through it unhampered by physical impediments. . . .

Cherish this as a great heritage" (patriarchal blessing of Boyd K. Packer, 15 Jan. 1944, 1).

That was a great comfort to me. Because of childhood polio, I was not able to participate in sports and was left with a feeling of inferiority when compared to my friends.

My patriarchal blessing counseled: "Guard and protect [your body]—take nothing into it that shall harm the organs thereof because it is sacred. It is the instrument of your mind and the foundation of your character."

I found in the Word of Wisdom a principle with a promise:

The principle: Care for your body; avoid habit-forming stimulants, tea, coffee, tobacco, liquor, and drugs (see D&C 89:3-9). Such addictive things do little more than relieve a craving which they caused in the first place.

The promise: Those who obey will receive better health (see D&C 89:18) and "great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures" (D&C 89:19).

Body is the foundation of our character

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man. . . . All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 181).

Even the severe tests of health or a handicapped or disabled body can refine a soul for the glorious day of restoration and healing which surely will come.

Your body really *is* the instrument of your mind and the foundation of your character.

Importance of dress and grooming

President Harold B. Lee taught of the important symbolic and actual effect of how we dress and groom our bodies. If you are well groomed and modestly dressed, you invite the companionship of the Spirit of our Father in Heaven and exercise a wholesome influence upon those around you. To be unkempt in your appearance exposes you to influences that are degrading (see *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 220).

Avoid immodest clothing. Dress and groom to show the Lord that you know how precious your body is.

President Hinckley has warned you not to decorate your body with pictures or symbols that will never wash off or to pierce your body with rings or jewelry after the manner of the world (see "Your Greatest Challenge, Mother," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 99).

You would not paint a temple with dark pictures or symbols or graffiti or even initials. Do not do so with your body.

"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

Proper use of sacred procreative power

There is in your body the supernal power to create life. Boys grow up to be men and may become fathers; girls grow up to be women and may become mothers. Natural and good feelings draw men and women together.

"All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

"Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and . . . the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

You should be attracted to one another and to marry. Then, and only then, may you worthily respond to the strong and good and constant desire to express that love through which children will bless your lives. By commandment of God our Father, that must happen only between husband and wife—man and woman—committed to one another in the covenant of marriage (see 1 Corinthians 7:2; D&C 42:22). To do otherwise is forbidden and will bring sorrow.

It is about controlling these natural desires that the strictest commandments are given in the revelations (see *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 181; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:5; Mormon 9:28).

Young men and women, keep yourselves worthy. Stay away from those environments, the music, the films, the videos, the clubs, and the associations that draw you into immoral conduct (see 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:22; D&C 9:13).

Danger of same-gender attraction

Now, I must speak of another danger, almost unknown in our youth but now everywhere about you. Normal desires and attractions emerge in the teenage years; there is the temptation to experiment, to tamper with the sacred power of procreation. These desires can be intensified, even perverted, by pornography,

improper music, or the encouragement from unworthy associations. What would have been only a more or less normal passing phase in establishing gender identity can become implanted and leave you confused, even disturbed.

If you consent, the adversary can take control of your thoughts and lead you carefully toward a habit and to an addiction, convincing you that immoral, unnatural behavior is a fixed part of your nature.

With some few, there is the temptation which seems nearly overpowering for man to be attracted to man or woman to woman. The scriptures plainly condemn those who "dishonour their own bodies between themselves: . . . men with men working that which is unseemly" (Romans 1:24, 27) or "women [who] change the natural use into that which is against nature" (Romans 1:26).

The gates of freedom, and the good or bad beyond, swing open or closed to the password *choice*. You are free to choose a path that may lead to despair, to disease, even to death (see 2 Nephi 2:26–27).

If you choose that course, the fountains of life may dry up. You will not experience the combination of love and struggle, the pain and pleasure, the disappointment and sacrifice, that love which, blended together in parenthood, exalts a man or a woman and leads to that fulness of joy spoken of in the scriptures (see 2 Nephi 2:25; 9:18; D&C 11:13; 42:61; 101:36).

Do not experiment; do not let anyone of either gender touch your body to awaken passions that can flame beyond control. It begins as an innocent curiosity; Satan influences your thoughts, and it becomes a pattern, a habit, which may imprison you in an addiction, to the sorrow and disappointment of those who love you (see John 8:34; 2 Peter 2:12–14, 18–19).

Pressure is put upon legislatures to legalize unnatural conduct. They can

never make right that which is forbidden in the laws of God (see Leviticus 18:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:9–10).

We reject the sin but love the sinner

Sometimes we are asked why we do not recognize this conduct as a diverse and acceptable lifestyle. This we cannot do. We did not make the laws; they were made in heaven "before the foundation of the world" (D&C 132:5; 124:41; see also Alma 22:13). We are servants only.

Just as with the prophets in ancient times, we have been "consecrated priests and teachers of this people, . . . [responsible to] magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence" (Jacob 1:18–19).

We understand why some feel we reject them. That is not true. We *do not* reject you, only immoral behavior. We *cannot* reject you, for you are the sons and daughters of God. We *will not* reject you, because we love you (see Hebrews 12:6–9; Romans 3:19; Helaman 15:3; D&C 95:1).

You may even feel that we do not love you. That also is not true. Parents know, and one day you will know, that there are times when parents and we who lead the Church must extend *tough* love when failing to teach and to warn and to discipline is to destroy.

We did not make the rules; they were revealed as commandments. We do not cause nor can we prevent the consequences if you disobey the moral laws (see D&C 101:78). In spite of criticism or opposition, we must teach and we must warn.

Counsel on resisting unnatural desires

When any unworthy desires press into your mind, fight them, resist them,

control them (see James 4:6–8; 2 Nephi 9:39; Mosiah 3:19). The Apostle Paul taught, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13; see also D&C 62:1).

That may be a struggle from which you will not be free in this life. If you do not act on temptations, you need feel no guilt. They may be extremely difficult to resist. But that is better than to yield and bring disappointment and unhappiness to you and those who love you.

Some think that God created them with overpowering, unnatural desires, that they are trapped and not responsible (see James 1:13–15). That is not true. It cannot be true. Even if they were to accept it as true, they must remember that He can cure and He can heal (see Alma 7:10–13; 15:8).

Repenting of moral transgressions

Now, what of you who have already made mistakes or have lost yourselves to an immoral lifestyle? What hope do you have? Are you cast off and lost forever?

These are not unforgivable sins. However unworthy or unnatural or immoral these transgressions may be, they are not unforgivable (see D&C 42:25). When completely forsaken and fully repented of, there can open the purifying gift of forgiveness, and the burden of guilt will be erased. There is a way back—long, perhaps; hard, certainly; possible, of course! (see Acts 5:31; Ephesians 1:7; Mosiah 4:2; 26:29; D&C 1:31–32; 58:42; 61:2).

You need not, you cannot find your way alone. You have a Redeemer. The Lord will lift your burden if you choose to repent and turn from your sins and do

them no more. That is what the Atonement of Christ was for.

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

The choice rests with you; you are not cast off forever. I repeat, these transgressions are not unforgivable.

One may think, “It is too late; my life will soon be over, and I am eternally doomed.” Not so, for “if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Just as the physical body can be cleansed and healed, so can the spirit be washed clean by the power of the Atonement. The Lord will lift you and carry your burden during the suffering and struggle required to make you clean. That is what the Atonement of Christ is all about. He said, “I, the Lord, [will] remember [your sins] no more” (D&C 58:42; see also Hebrews 8:12; 10:17; Alma 36:19).

Stay in the Lord’s way

Our beloved, precious youth, stay in the Lord’s way. If you stumble, rise up; go on. If you have lost your way, we open our arms and await your return.

God be praised for the cleansing, purifying, forgiving power of the Atonement brought by the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom I bear witness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Keith Crockett of the Seventy.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Be dedicated to building the kingdom

In March of 1839 from the bleak dungeon that was Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith counseled the Church:

"There are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men . . . and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it" (D&C 123:12).

Years later, at the age of 15, the Prophet's nephew Joseph F. Smith was called to serve a mission in Hawaii. You will remember that he was only five when his father, Hyrum, was martyred. His mother, Mary Fielding, died when he was just 13. Upon arriving on the island of Maui, young Joseph fell gravely ill. Despite these and other adversities, he wrote to Elder George A. Smith:

"I am ready to bear my testimony . . . at any time, or at any place, or in whatsoever circumstances I may be placed. . . . I am ready to go through thick and thin for this cause in which I am engaged" (quoted in Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Life of Joseph F. Smith* [1938], 176).

Today we must ask ourselves: Are we ready and willing to go through thick and thin for the cause in which we are engaged? Do we reflect in our countenances the joy of living the gospel of Jesus Christ as true disciples should? If we do not understand and willingly teach others of the Restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith, who will? We cannot place the burden of taking the gospel to all people solely on the backs of the full-time missionaries. Families will not be fortified, nor will individual testimonies be strengthened; convert baptisms will not be increased, nor will the less active be welcomed back until we as members of the Church arise individually and collectively, with dedication and action, to help build the kingdom of God.

True conversion is the key

Our duty lies in assisting others, through the power of the Spirit, to *know* and *understand* the doctrines and principles of the gospel. Everyone must come to *feel* that the doctrines of the Restoration are true and of great value. And everyone who accepts the message must strive to *live* the gospel by making and keeping sacred covenants and by participating in all the ordinances of salvation and exaltation. We often think of conversion as applying only to investigators, but there are some members who are not yet fully converted and who have yet to experience the mighty change of heart described in the scriptures (see Alma 5:12).

Brethren and sisters, true and complete conversion is the key to accelerating the work of the Church.

We know that both members and nonmembers are more likely to be thoroughly converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ when they are willing to experiment upon the word (see Alma 32:27). This is an attitude of both mind and heart that includes a desire to know the truth and a willingness to act on that desire. For those investigating the Church, the experiment can be as simple as agreeing to read the Book of Mormon, to pray about it, and to earnestly seek to know if Joseph Smith was the Lord's prophet.

True conversion comes through the power of the Spirit. When the Spirit touches the heart, hearts are changed. When individuals, both members and investigators, feel the Spirit working with them, or when they see the evidence of the Lord's love and mercy in their lives, they are edified and strengthened spiritually, and their faith in Him increases. These experiences with the Spirit follow naturally when a person is willing to experiment upon the word. This is how we come to *feel* the gospel is true.

Sharing gospel is evidence of conversion

A most significant evidence of our conversion and of how we feel about the gospel in our lives is our willingness to share it with others and help missionaries find someone to teach. The likelihood of lasting conversion greatly increases when a nonmember has a friend or a relative who radiates the joy of being a member of the Church. The influence of members of the Church is very powerful. I believe that's why President Hinckley asked us to see that everyone has a friend (see Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 65; or *Ensign*, May 1997, 47).

Here, then, is an important key to our success in accelerating the Lord's work. As active members of the Church, and especially as priesthood and auxiliary leaders, we need to do more to assist in the process of conversion, retention, and activation. We know that faithful members desire to serve, but sometimes we lose sight of the essential outcomes that our faith and works ought to produce in strengthening the commitment of our Father's children to the gospel.

Use councils to strengthen conversion

Bishops, you are the key. You give the vision and invite your ward council to help you strengthen the spiritual conversion of those investigating the Church as well as all of your members. Encourage council members to constantly think about the specific things they can do to assist you in helping your ward members and their nonmember friends to better know and understand the gospel. What can they do to help them feel it is true and to support them as they strive to live the principles? Ask yourselves what specific things we as priesthood and auxiliary leaders can do to encourage a family or an individual to experiment on the good word of God. What can the council do as leaders and teachers to ensure that every person who attends our Church

meetings feels the Spirit and is strengthened spiritually?

We are just now learning to focus on the right things in our council meetings, but too often we focus only on generalities. In one stake where they are having great success in baptizing and retaining new converts, the full-time missionaries are invited to meet with the ward council to discuss people they are teaching. The council members seek inspiration in determining which leaders and ward members can best help the missionaries fellowship specific individuals and families and bring them into the Church.

Use councils to make best use of ward resources

Some of you bishops feel like you must be involved in every action your council members take. This is a mistake because if you do, you will never bring all the powerful resources God has given to you into full strength. At the general Relief Society meeting two weeks ago, Sister Sheri Dew said she believes the sisters are "the Lord's secret weapon" ("Stand Tall and Stand Together," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 96). I think she is right. Our sister leaders have a spiritual sensitivity that will prompt them how to best approach and nurture those whom the missionaries are teaching. The best place to begin to fully utilize the talents and wisdom of our sisters is through the established council system of the Church. You are free to be flexible in how you use the ward council.

Just last year, President Hinckley said this to the bishops of the Church:

"You are not bound by rigid rules. You have unlimited flexibility. You are entitled to answers to your prayers, to inspiration and revelation from the Lord" ("Find the Lambs, Feed the Sheep," *Ensign*, May 1999, 110).

Perhaps in some cases, holding council meetings only once a month will not be sufficient to focus on the spiritual con-

version of members and nonmembers alike who are under your ministering care. You are free to meet in council as often as deemed necessary.

Council members support a young girl

Recently a stake president shared with me a tender story demonstrating the power of the council system in building up the Church. He said that both the Relief Society and the priesthood had been working with a family in their stake but had failed to make progress with the parents. Primary leaders found the answer. Permission was given by the parents for their young daughter to attend Primary. Their one condition was that she had to want to go badly enough to get there on her own. Rides to church could not be provided. Because she had to go through a rough part of town, the ward council saw to it that someone would drive along beside her as she rode an old bicycle to church.

Through summer heat, through rain and even snow, she persisted in going to church. One young man, who with his family was assigned to escort her on a snowy morning, was so touched as he watched the commitment of this little girl pedaling through the snow and cold that he decided to serve a full-time mission, citing this experience as the turning point in his life.

At Christmastime, a family in the ward gave this faithful little girl a new 10-speed bicycle. This so touched the parents that they too began attending church. In May 1999 this young girl was baptized. What made the baptism even more special was that it was performed by the newest priest in the ward, her recently activated father.

Help council members work together

Bishops, for you to accomplish what the First Presidency and the Quorum of

the Twelve are asking, your ward council needs to capture this vision and work more closely together in doing God's great work of bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of all of His children. Imagine the power that would come if every member of the Church would reach out to help all members and investigators enjoy the companionship of the Spirit. Let all of us work harder to see that the presence of the Spirit is in all of our meetings to bring about deeper spiritual conversion. This will especially require ward councils to assist the bishops in improving reverence in our sacrament meetings and in better teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ in all of our Church meetings.

Now is the time to be bold in reaching out

All of us should constantly think about the Savior giving His life for us. We must never forget that He suffered rejection, humiliation, unspeakable agony, and eventually death in order to save you and me and the whole world from sin. Can any one of us go before Him in some future day and say that we didn't share the gospel with others and help others come to the missionaries because we were too busy or too shy, or for any other reason?

This is God's work. He wants us to participate with Him and His Beloved Son in bringing the gospel into the lives of all of His children. The Lord has promised us that our joy will be great if we bring just one soul unto Him (see D&C 18:15-16). Let us exercise greater faith and work together, members and missionaries, to bring many more souls unto Him. Let every family in the Church include as part of their daily family prayers a plea with the Lord to go before your family members and help them to find someone prepared to receive the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now is the time for members of the Church to be more bold in reaching out

to others, helping them to know the Church is true. Now is the time to sustain by our actions what President Gordon B. Hinckley is asking us to do.

Marshal all resources in the Lord's work

Lucifer is unleashing vulgar, revolting, violent, and sleazy filth with the design to destroy the spiritual sensitivity of our Father's children. We truly are at war with those who mock God and shun the truth, so let us keep our covenants and heed our call to service. Let us marshal all of the Lord's resources, including the power of our own testimonies. Let them be heard by many more people. Let the spirit of President Joseph F. Smith be in our hearts. Let us say, "I am ready to bear my testimony . . . at any time, or at any place, or in whatsoever circumstances I may be placed." It will help us

to do this by reading often the Prophet Joseph Smith's own story and then sharing with others our own sure knowledge that the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored once again to the earth.

We must move forward with the promise that the Spirit will bless us to know what to do and what to say as we assist those who are seeking to know the truth. Let us go forward with more faith, never forgetting that the Lord will help us as we turn to Him in mighty prayer. Our Heavenly Father lives and loves each of His children. The Lord Jesus Christ lives. The most important work we can do is to help God's children come to a full understanding of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This I know to be true and so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Keith Crockett

Retaining a remission of sin

It was in his final address to his people that King Benjamin gave them a formula for retaining a remission of their sins. He had seen their willingness to enter into a covenant with God to do His will and to be obedient to His commandments in all things. Would it not be beneficial for us to review that formula so that we too might enjoy this great blessing?

After having received the great joy that comes from knowing the goodness of God and having tasted of His love, King Benjamin taught his people three basic principles that would help them retain a remission of their sins: first, to remain humble; second, to call upon the Lord daily; and third, to stand steadfast in the faith of that which was to come (see Mosiah 4:11).

Let us review each of these so that we may also be strengthened in our resolves to retain a remission of our sins.

Remain humble

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught us that "all progress in spiritual things is conditioned upon the prior attainment of *humility*."¹ Humility has been described as having the "desire to submit to the Lord," the "desire to seek the Lord's will and glory," and the "desire to remove pride."²

King Benjamin told his people that they should "always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility" (Mosiah 4:11). The Lord counseled in the Doctrine and Covenants that "inasmuch as they were

humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time" (D&C 1:28).

May we each develop our humility by submitting to the will of the Lord in all things so that we may retain a remission of our sins.

Call upon the Lord daily

Prayer is one of the greatest blessings we have while here on earth. Through prayer we can communicate with our Heavenly Father and seek His guidance daily. Jesus taught, "Ye must always pray unto the Father in my name" (3 Nephi 18:19). We should pray each day that we will have the power to resist temptation. Amulek teaches us that we should pray "morning, mid-day, and evening" and that our hearts should "be full, drawn out in prayer unto [God] continually" (Alma 34:21, 27). Our daily prayers influence our thoughts, our words, and our actions. In order to retain a remission of our sins, it is essential that we ask our Heavenly Father each day for strength to stay in the straight and narrow way.

In the general conference of last April, President James E. Faust taught that "to sustain faith, each of us must be humble and compassionate, kind and generous to the poor and the needy. Faith is further sustained by daily doses of spirituality that come to us as we kneel in prayer."³

A beautiful portrayal of prayer was given by President Gordon B. Hinckley in his opening remarks of the October 1996 general conference:

"You have prayed that you might hear things that will help you with your problems and add strength to your faith. I assure you that we have prayed also. We have prayed for inspiration and direction. There is a constant prayer in our hearts that we will not fail in the great trust the Lord has placed in us and the trust . . . you have placed in us. We have prayed that we might be prompted to say those

words which will build faith and testimony and which will become answered prayers for those who will hear."⁴

I testify that those who call upon the Lord daily will have greater power to retain a remission of their sins.

Stand steadfast

Recently I stood with the missionaries of the Montevideo Uruguay West Mission as they quoted aloud the fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day" (D&C 4:2).

I felt the Spirit of their callings as they stood steadfast in their stewardships of bringing souls to Christ. Latter-day Saints are commanded to "lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand" (D&C 27:15).

King Benjamin taught his people to stand steadfast "in the faith of that which [was] to come" (Mosiah 4:11). They had "cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, . . . who shall come down among the children of men.

". . . The Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of [their] exceeding faith . . . in Jesus Christ who should come" (Mosiah 4:2-3).

Today we can stand steadfast in the testimony of "The Living Christ," given by living Apostles: "We testify that He will someday return to earth. 'And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together' (Isaiah 40:5). He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of

Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts."⁵

Brothers and sisters, these blessings can be ours if we will apply these same three principles in our lives. Those Saints in King Benjamin's day were promised that if they would do this, they would always rejoice and be filled with the love of God. This gave them power in retaining a remission of their sins. They were promised that they would grow in the knowledge of the Lord and in the knowledge of that which was just and true. They would have no mind to injure one another but would live at peace with one another. They would discipline their children with love and teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness. They would love one another and serve one another. They would impart of their substance to care for the poor, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to take care of the sick. They would administer relief to their fellowmen both spiritually and temporally. What greater blessing could we ask for?

May God grant that we too may retain a remission of our sins. I testify that God lives and that His Only Begotten Son is indeed our Savior and our Redeemer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 370.
2. *Gospel Principles* (1997), 4.
3. In Conference Report, Apr. 2000, 21; or *Ensign*, May 2000, 18.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 3; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 4.
5. "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 3.

President Faust

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Keith Crockett of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation." Following the singing, Elders H. Aldridge Gillespie and Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy will address us.

The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

Elder H. Aldridge Gillespie

Bind ourselves to act in all holiness

To all you beautiful, faithful Sunday afternoon Saints, we commend you for the respect of the Sabbath day which you show by attending conference this afternoon, wherever you may be.

We have been instructed, edified, and spiritually nourished through the five sessions of this magnificent general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have been taught "how to act upon the points of [the Lord's] law and commandments,"¹ and have been "sanctified by that which [we] have received."²

Now it is time to "bind [ourselves] to act in all holiness before [the Lord]."³ In other words, based on this conference, we need to decide on specific actions to bring about needed changes in our lives. This action is called faith, and the changes are repentance. Blessings always follow these two principles. If we do not take action quickly, then the very thing which could have sanctified us may turn to our condemnation.

Keeping the Sabbath day holy

Today is the Sabbath. It does not end when we leave this session; it does not end

if someone calls on the phone or knocks at our door inviting us to come out and play, go for a ride, go to a ball game, or go shopping; it does not end because we are on vacation or someone is visiting us, whether member or nonmember.

The Lord commanded: "Go ye out from among the wicked. Save yourselves. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord."⁴ A critical element in observing this commandment is to "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."⁵

The Sabbath lasts all day! In a revelation "especially applicable to the saints in Zion,"⁶ the Lord states that the Sabbath was given that we might keep ourselves "unspotted from the world."⁷ It is a day to partake of the sacrament, a day "to pay [our] devotions unto the Most High,"⁸ a day of "fasting and prayer,"⁹ a day to offer our time, talent, and means in service to our God and our fellowmen,¹⁰ a day to "[confess our] sins [to our] brethren, and before the Lord."¹¹ It is also a good day to pay our tithes and fast offerings, a day to be marked by sincere sacrifice of the pursuits and pleasures of the world. It is a day to keep the Sabbath covenant,¹² a day of "rejoicing and prayer,"¹³ a day of "cheerful hearts and countenances."¹⁴

Isaiah promised, "If thou turn away thy foot . . . from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, . . . and . . . honour him, not . . . finding thine own pleasure, . . . then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord."¹⁵

Not a day for recreation or loafing

Obviously our attention is on doing the Lord's will and not on continuing to work or on indulging our carnal appetites for recreation and loafing.

The prophet Spencer W. Kimball counseled:

"The Sabbath is a holy day in which to do worthy and holy things. Abstinence from work and recreation is important but insufficient. The Sabbath calls for constructive thoughts and acts, and if one

merely lounges about doing nothing on the Sabbath, he is breaking it. To observe it, one will be on his knees in prayer, preparing lessons, studying the gospel, meditating, visiting the ill and distressed, sleeping, reading wholesome material, and attending all the meetings of that day to which he is expected. [Failure] to do these proper things is a transgression on the omission side."¹⁶

Our beloved prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, has promised:

"If you have any doubt about the wisdom, the divinity of observing the Sabbath Day, . . . stay home and gather your family about you, teach them the gospel, enjoy yourselves together on the Sabbath Day, come to your meetings, participate. You will know that the principle of the Sabbath is a true principle which brings with it great blessings."¹⁷

The Sabbath is "a perpetual covenant"

Jesus taught that "the sabbath was made for man."¹⁸ What does that mean? It means that for us to have the joy and happiness which the gospel promises, on this day we must sacrifice the world, set aside our employment as possible, and keep the eternal covenant of the Sabbath day. The Lord commanded: "Wherefore the children of Israel [which includes all Latter-day Saints] shall keep the sabbath . . . throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever."¹⁹

Of all people on the earth, Latter-day Saints must lead out in sanctifying this appointed day each week. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees," said the Lord, "ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."²⁰

To this very day, "the matter of Sabbath observance remains . . . as one of the great tests which divides the righteous from the worldly and wicked," said Elder Bruce R. McConkie.²¹

Promises for keeping the Sabbath holy

The Lord's promises to those who keep the Sabbath day holy are so wonderfully clear in the scriptures that they leave one asking, "Why would anyone throw away such blessings for the tawdry, temporary pleasures of the world?" Hear again the words of Jehovah as they roll down from Mount Sinai:

"Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.

"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;

"Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase. . . .

" . . . And ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

"And I will give peace in the land, . . . neither shall the sword go through your land. . . .

"For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, . . . and establish my covenant with you. . . .

"And I will set my tabernacle [that is, my temple] among you. . . .

"And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people."²²

I love the Sabbath day! It has blessed my family in countless ways. I bear a testimony born of personal experience that the commandments of the Lord are "true and faithful."²³

I know that you will be happier, enjoy greater peace, and find your lives made glad as you witness the miracles that come to each person and family who make the sacrifice of keeping this eternal covenant.

I love our Lord and Savior. I know He lives and that this is His Church and kingdom on earth. I know He is at once a just and merciful God, who loves His children with all the tenderness of a kind and loving Father. May we, in turn, "offer a sacrifice unto the Lord [our] God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit,"²⁴ I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 43:8.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 43:9.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 43:9.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 38:42.
5. Exodus 20:8.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 59 section heading.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 59:10.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 59:14.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 59:12 reads, "Thou shalt offer thine oblations," meaning to offer one's time, talents, or means (see footnote b).
11. Doctrine and Covenants 59:12.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:12.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 59:14.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 59:15.
15. Isaiah 58:13-14.
16. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 96-97.
17. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 559.
18. Mark 2:27.
19. Exodus 31:16-17.
20. Matthew 5:20.
21. *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (1966), 658.
22. Leviticus 26:2-12.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 71:11.
24. Doctrine and Covenants 59:8.

Elder Robert C. Oaks

Importance of missionary work

I thrill to hear the prophet stand at this pulpit and declare how he sees the

work of the Lord rolling forth to fill the earth like that stone, cut without hands, that Daniel saw in his vision (see Daniel 2:34-35).

This work is driven by the Spirit of the Lord and through the operation of priesthood authority given to man. But it moves forward on the wheels of missionary work by those who have responded to the Lord's call to "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Increase the number of converts

The gospel of Jesus Christ with all of its purity, beauty, and simplicity has been restored to the earth in these latter days through the great prophet of this dispensation, Joseph Smith.

We who have tasted the sweet fruits of the gospel know it as a fountain of faith, hope, and peace—a constant source of joy. Indeed, it is a rare jewel to be treasured and a rare jewel to be shared. There are 60,000 full-time missionaries engaged in the sharing process. Their efforts, coupled with those of stake missionaries and members, yielded some 300,000 new converts last year.

But this is not enough. Given the importance of the message, the help offered by the Spirit, the number of missionaries, and the size of the field that is ready to harvest, 300,000 new converts per year are not nearly enough. In fact, last year President Hinckley challenged Church members to significantly increase the number of converts. We are not yet on that prophetically prompted track.

This is what prophets do; they help us reach up to new heights.

President David O. McKay advised, "Every member a missionary";¹

President Kimball: "Lengthen your stride"² and "Do it now";³

President Benson: "Flood the earth with the Book of Mormon";⁴

And now President Hinckley: Increase the number of converts and retain them.

Do we need more specific instructions?

Guidelines for member-missionary work

Let me review the four-step instructions we have received regarding member-missionary work:

1. Identify prayerfully your friends and neighbors who would be the most receptive to the gospel message.

2. Introduce the identified individuals to the missionaries.

3. Involve yourself in the teaching of the gospel, preferably in your home.

4. Integrate your friends and any other new members into the Church by being attentive and helpful.

Through this simple, compact process we *can* increase the number of converts, and, more importantly, we can help the new converts achieve full fellowship. Increased member involvement is the only way to increase our current conversion rate.

Do not fear rejection

We have heard all of this many times. Why don't we do better in providing referrals? It is not laziness, because Latter-day Saints are not lazy people. I believe that the fear of rejection or the fear of hurting a friendship are the more common restraints to sharing the gospel.

But are these fears valid? When you extend to a friend an invitation to meet with the missionaries, you are offering to share something that is most valuable and cherished. Is that offensive? Sister Oaks and I have not found this to be the case. In fact, we have found that when we offer to share the gospel, friendships are strengthened, even though the friends may not embrace the gospel message.

Consider that you are invited to a friend's house for breakfast. On the table you see a large pitcher of freshly squeezed orange juice from which your host fills his glass. But he offers you none. Finally you ask, "Could I have a glass of orange juice?"

He replies, "Oh, I am sorry. I was afraid you might not like orange juice, and I didn't want to offend you by offering you something you didn't desire."

Now, that sounds absurd, but it is not too different from the way we hesitate to offer up something far sweeter than orange juice. I have often worried how I would answer some friend about my hesitancy when I meet him beyond the veil.

"Why have you kept it a secret?"

A story related by Elder Christoffel Golden of South Africa refreshed my concerns. He was recently in Lusaka, Zambia, attending a meeting of new converts. A well-spoken, well-dressed stranger with a Book of Mormon in hand walked in. He stated he had driven past the chapel many times and had wondered what church met there and what they taught for doctrine.

At the conclusion of the meeting, this gentleman stood up, raised his copy of the Book of Mormon high in the air, and asked, "Why have you kept this book hidden from the people of Lusaka? Why have you kept it a secret?"

As I heard this story, I flinched that one day some friend might ask me, "Why have you kept this Book of Mormon, with its message of truth and salvation, a secret?"

My reply, "I was afraid I would damage our friendship," will not be very satisfying to either me or my friend.

Brothers and sisters, I pray that we may put our fears and our hesitancy behind us and no more keep secret the great treasure that is ours.

Senior couple missionaries

One last thought regarding missionary work: During my short time in south-east Africa, I have been overwhelmed by the remarkable service rendered by se-

nior couple missionaries. Daily they make significant contributions to the strengthening of the members and to rolling that stone, cut without hands, forward on its eternal course. What a mighty team for righteousness they make when joined with the younger missionaries and the local members.

Whether in leadership, proselyting, temple, humanitarian, welfare, or Church education service, the contribution of these experienced, testimony-bearing souls is beyond measure. And without exception I see them deriving great personal satisfaction from their service.

If you are retired, or retirement eligible, and wondering what useful things you might do with the rest of your life, contact your bishop. Let him share with you his exciting list of missionary opportunities.

Today, take your spouse by the hand and see if you don't agree that the best thing for all concerned, including your grandchildren, would be for you to accept an assignment to serve the Lord as missionaries. This is His work, and He beckons us to join Him in it.

I testify that God, our Eternal Father, and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, live. Christ came to earth and fulfilled His calling as the Redeemer of all mankind. I testify that His gospel has been restored in its fulness and that there is a living prophet, Gordon B. Hinckley, guiding this work under the direction of the Father and of the Son. And I so do in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 122.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 4; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 4.
3. "Always a Convert Church," *Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 3.
4. In Conference Report, Oct. 1988, 4; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 5.

President Faust

Elders H. Aldridge Gillespie and Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy have just spoken to us.

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder F. Enzo Busche of the Seventy, who yesterday received emeritus status. He will be followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder F. Enzo Busche

Feelings of awe for the Restoration

If I would be asked what, in my understanding, is the most important event to have happened on earth in the last 200 years, I would answer without any hesitation: it is the consequence of the prayer of a young boy who, in the early years of the 19th century, in upstate New York, knelt before God and asked questions of eternal truth.

This young man with the name Joseph Smith became, in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, the instrument to restore to mankind the knowledge of the long-lost and nearly forgotten truth: the knowledge about us human beings—who we are, where we came from, what the meaning and purpose of our earthly existence is, and why mankind has experienced so much misery and injustice. Eventually answers were also given to mankind's questions of life after death and our final destiny.

Even to this day, more than 42 years after I accepted, by my own choice, the Lord's sacred covenant of baptism, I am still in a state of awe at all of the marvelous and miraculous happenings of the Restoration. Not only were we permitted to learn all about the essential meaning of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also the important meaning of the priesthood of God was revealed, and it was restored for us to act in caring love and patience to bring about the choice of salvation to all.

A friend refuses alcoholic drinks

Time will not allow me to talk more about the details of this marvelous work in our time, but I feel to talk about one key aspect in the Lord's kingdom that, if not understood, may result in the fact that the whole picture may never be quite in focus.

In order to come to the point, I want to tell you of a faithful brother who was a member of the same branch in my home country of Germany in the early years of my membership.

He was living in humble circumstances and felt very blessed to have recently begun a job in a small, privately owned company. He told me about an upcoming event where all of the employed people were invited to participate in a traditional company dinner party. He was concerned because he knew that there would be a big beer party at the end of this meeting, with the boss being probably the heaviest beer drinker of them all. But he also knew that it would be considered very impolite if he did not attend the dinner at all.

When I saw him again after that dinner event occurred, I saw him with a most happy, deep inner glow, and he could not wait to tell me what had happened. Because he was new in the company, the boss had sat right next to him, wanting to get to know him better. As the evening progressed, the brother saw his wildest fears confirmed because the boss would

not tolerate that he would not drink beer with him, and he said, "What kind of church is that that would not permit you to drink even a glass of beer with me?"

The fear of my friend did not grow into panic as he was able to calmly answer his boss that the reason he was not drinking had nothing to do with the church that he belonged to, but that *he* himself had made a sacred covenant with God that he would not drink. If he would ever break this covenant, how could he continue to stay true to that which he would ever promise, and how could he be trusted, even by his employer, that he would not lie or steal or cheat?

According to my friend, the owner was deeply touched by this statement, and he hugged him, speaking words of profound admiration and confidence.

Freedom from or freedom to

My dear brothers and sisters, in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, many new members, specifically when they come from countries other than the United States, learn for the first time the true dimension of the word *freedom*. Freedom for most people of the world means "freedom from"—the absence of malice or pain or suppression. But the freedom that God means when He deals with us goes one step further. He means "freedom to"—the freedom to act in the dignity of our own choice.

What, then, does it mean to be free? Freedom means to have matured to the full knowledge of our dangerously many responsibilities as human beings. We have learned that everything we do, and even say or think, has consequences. We realize that too long we have believed that we were victims of circumstances. In the Gospel of John 8:32, we read the following: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

As we open our hearts to the message of God's truth as it was restored in our time, we begin to understand why

there was, and still is, so much misery, pain, suffering, and even starvation. In the same dimension, as we are learning to accept the revealed truth in our own life, our faith in the living Son of God will grow, and therefore we will receive spiritual gifts of heretofore unknown capacity. We will learn that nothing is impossible for those who believe in Jesus Christ. False bondages will be loosened. Narrow thinking born in tragedies of false traditions will disappear.

Freedom to make and keep covenants

The more our understanding of the vastness and the completeness of the plan of salvation is developing, the more we see ourselves in our smallness, in our incompleteness. And seeing ourselves in that humility, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, will let us understand and finally accept this most sacred covenant with our Heavenly Father in the form of baptism.

We gladly will submit ourselves to this covenant, knowing that there is a big difference between mere desire and covenant. When we just desire something, we will work toward achieving it only when convenient. But when we are bound by a sacred covenant, like baptism, we learn to overcome all obstacles through obedience, and in so doing we are blessed with the presence of the Spirit and therefore eventually with achievement. We are beginning to become alive as we take, knowingly, full responsibility for our own life and as we stop blaming circumstances.

Freedom to make wrong choices

One thing, of course, we know: having "freedom to" means that we have the potential of making wrong choices. Wrong choices have their merciless consequences. When they are not stopped and corrected, they lead to misery and pain. Wrong choices, if not corrected, will lead us to the ultimate possible disas-

ter in each person's life: to become separated from our Heavenly Father in the world to come.

Jesus wants to empower our lives

When we have received this life-enabling message, we begin to understand that in our earlier life we were like a football player standing in the middle of the field, totally depressed because we did not know the purpose and the rules of the game. We did not know which team we belonged to and didn't even know who was our coach. Only in the awareness of the restored gospel, our game plan becomes clear and we comprehend that Jesus Christ and His restored Church and priesthood are the only way for us to succeed in our earthly experience.

Jesus Christ wants to empower our lives, according to our own righteous choices, to that dimension that, through our faith and our doings, the circum-

stances whose prisoners we were in the past will eventually change. In the Book of Mormon we learn that the Redeemer monitors our lives, together with a multitude of holy angels. We read:

"Have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men.

"For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith" (Moroni 7:29-30).

In this freedom that we have received in our time, through our understanding of His divine plan for us, we stand in our full responsibility. Let us always stay close to the loving, caring hand of our Savior and our Redeemer to find safety and joy. I say this in deep humility. And I bear you my testimony as your brother and servant that I know that Jesus lives and that He is the head of this work. I say this in Jesus' name, amen.

Elder Henry B. Eyring

Importance of teaching children to pray

Parents should teach their children to pray. The child learns both from what the parents do and what they say. The child who sees a mother or a father pass through the trials of life with fervent prayer to God and then hears a sincere testimony that God answered in kindness will remember what they saw and heard. When their trials come, they will be prepared.

In time, when the child is away from home and family, prayer can provide the shield of protection the parent will want so much for them to have. Parting can be hard, particularly when the parent and the child know that they may not see each other for a long time. I had that experience with my father. We parted on a street corner in New York City. He had

come there for his work. I was there on my way to another place. We both knew that I probably would never return to live with my parents under the same roof again.

It was a sunny day, around noon-time, the streets crowded with cars and pedestrians. On that particular corner there was a traffic light which stopped the cars and the people in all directions for a few minutes. The light changed to red; the cars stopped. The crowd of pedestrians hurried off the curbs, moving every way, including diagonally, across the intersection.

The time had come for parting, and I started across the street. I stopped almost in the center, with people rushing by me. I turned to look back. Instead of moving off in the crowd, my father was still standing on the corner looking at

me. To me he seemed lonely and perhaps a little sad. I wanted to go back to him, but I realized the light would change and so I turned and hurried on.

Years later I talked to him about that moment. He told me that I had misread his face. He said he was not sad; he was concerned. He had seen me look back, as if I were a little boy, uncertain and looking for assurance. He told me in those later years that the thought in his mind had been, "Will he be all right? Have I taught him enough? Is he prepared for whatever may lie ahead?"

There were more than thoughts in his mind. I knew from having watched him that he had feelings in his heart. He yearned for me to be protected, to be safe. I had heard and felt that yearning in his prayers, and even more in the prayers of my mother, for all the years I had lived with them. I had learned from that, and I remembered.

Parents' teachings about prayer

Use the sacred language of prayer

Prayer is a matter of the heart. I had been taught far more than the rules of prayer. I had learned from my parents and from the Savior's teachings that we must address our Heavenly Father in the reverent language of prayer. "Our Father . . . in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name" (Matthew 6:9). I knew that we never profane His sacred name—never. Can you imagine how the prayers of a child are harmed by hearing a parent profane the name of God? There will be terrible consequences for such an offense to the little ones.

Give thanks and ask for forgiveness

I had learned that it was important to give thanks for blessings and to ask for forgiveness. "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).

Be submissive to God's will

I had been taught that we ask for what we need and pray for others to be blessed. "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). I knew that we must surrender our will. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). I had been taught and found it true that we can be warned of danger and shown early what we have done which displeased God. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13).

Pray in the name of Jesus Christ

I had learned that we must always pray in the name of Jesus Christ. But something I had seen and heard had taught me those words were more than a formality. There was a picture of the Savior on the bedroom wall where my mother was bedridden in the years before she died. She had put it there because of something her cousin Samuel O. Bennion had told her. He had traveled with an Apostle who described seeing the Savior in a vision. Elder Bennion gave her that print, saying that it was the best portrayal he had ever seen of the Master's strength of character. So she framed it and placed it on the wall where she could see it from her bed.

She knew the Savior, and she loved Him. I had learned from her that we do not close in the name of a stranger when we approach our Father in prayer. I knew from what I had seen of her life that her heart was drawn to the Savior from years of determined and consistent effort to serve Him and to please Him. I knew the scripture was true which warns, "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?" (Mosiah 5:13).

Years after my mother and father are gone, the words "in the name of Je-

sus Christ" are not casual for me, either when I say them or when I hear others say them. We must serve Him to know the Master's heart. But we also must pray that Heavenly Father will answer our prayers in our hearts as well as in our minds (see Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10; 10:16; 2 Corinthians 3:3).

Ask God to write His will in our hearts

President George Q. Cannon described the blessing of people coming together having prayed for such answers. He was speaking of going to a priesthood meeting, yet many of you have come to this meeting with hearts prepared in the way he described in these words:

"I should enter that assembly with my mind entirely free from all influence that would prevent the operation of the Spirit of God upon me. I should go in a prayerful spirit, asking God to *write upon my heart* His will; not with my own will already prepared, and determined to carry out my will . . . , regardless of everyone else's views. If I were to go, and all the rest were to go, with this spirit, then the Spirit of God would be felt in our midst, and that which we would decide upon would be the mind and will of God, because God would reveal it to us. We would see light in the direction where we should go, and we would behold darkness in the direction we should not go" (*Deseret Semi-Weekly News*, 30 Sept. 1890, 2; italics added).

Teach children to be submissive in prayer

Our goal when we teach our children to pray is for them to want God to write upon their hearts and be willing then to go and do what God asks of them. It is possible for our children to have faith enough, from what they see us do and what we teach, that they can feel at least part of what the Savior felt as He prayed to have the strength to make His infinite sacrifice for us: "And he went a little fur-

ther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

I have had prayers answered. Those answers were most clear when what I wanted was silenced by an overpowering need to know what God wanted. It is then that the answer from a loving Heavenly Father can be spoken to the mind by the still, small voice and can be written on the heart.

Teaching children who have strayed

Some parents are listening with this question: "But how can I soften the heart of my child now grown older and convinced he or she doesn't need God? How can I soften a heart enough to allow God to write His will upon it?" Sometimes tragedy will soften a heart. But for some, even tragedy is not enough.

There is one need even the hardened and proud persons cannot believe they can meet for themselves. They cannot lift the weight of sin from their own shoulders. And even the most hardened may at times feel the prick of conscience and thus the need for forgiveness from God. A loving father, Alma, taught that need to his son Corianton this way:

"And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also" (Alma 42:15).

And then, after bearing testimony of the Savior and His Atonement, the father made this plea for a softened heart: "O my son, I desire that ye should deny the justice of God no more. Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins, by denying the justice of God; but do you let the justice of God, and his mercy, and his long-suffering have full sway in your heart;

and let it bring you down to the dust in humility" (Alma 42:30).

Alma knew what we can know: that testifying of Jesus Christ and Him crucified had the greatest possibility of his son coming to sense his need for the help only God could give. And prayers are answered to those whose hearts are softened by that overwhelming feeling of the need for cleansing.

Children must ask for themselves

When we teach those we love that we are spirit children temporarily away from a loving Heavenly Father, we open the door of prayer to them.

We lived in His presence before we came here to be tested. We knew His face, and He knew ours. Just as my earthly father watched me go away from him, our Father in Heaven watched us go into mortality.

His Beloved Son, Jehovah, left those glorious courts to come down into the world to suffer what we would suffer and to pay the price of all the sins we would commit. He provided for us the only way to go home again to our Heavenly Father and to Him. If the Holy Ghost can tell us just that much about who we are, we and our children might feel what Enos felt. He prayed this way:

"And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

"And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed" (Enos 1:4-5).

I can promise you that no joy will exceed what you would feel if a child of yours prays in the hour of need and receives such an answer. You will someday be separated from them, with a longing in your heart to be reunited. A loving Heavenly Father knows that longing would last

forever unless we are reunited as families with Him and His Beloved Son. He put in place all His children will need to have that blessing. To find it, they must ask of God for themselves, nothing doubting, as the boy Joseph Smith did.

Father's prayer after Mother's death

My dad was concerned that day in New York because he knew, as my mother knew, that the only real tragedy would be if we were apart forever. That is why they taught me to pray. They knew we could be together forever only with God's help and with His assurances. As you will do, they taught prayer best by example.

The afternoon my mother died, we went to the family home from the hospital. We sat quietly in the darkened living room for a while. Dad excused himself and went to his bedroom. He was gone for a few minutes. When he walked back into the living room, there was a smile on his face. He said that he'd been concerned for Mother. During the time that he had gathered her things from her hospital room and thanked the staff for being so kind to her, he thought of her going into the spirit world just minutes after her death. He was afraid she would be lonely if there was no one to meet her.

He had gone to his bedroom to ask his Heavenly Father to have someone greet Mildred—his wife and my mother. He said that he had been told in answer to his prayer that his mother had met his sweetheart. I smiled at that too. Grandma Eyring was not very tall. I had a clear picture of her rushing through the crowd, her short legs moving rapidly on her mission to meet my mother.

Dad surely didn't intend at that moment to teach me about prayer, but he did. I can't remember a sermon from my mother or my father about prayer. They prayed when times were hard and when they were good. And they reported in matter-of-fact ways how kind God was, how powerful and how close. The prayers

I heard most were about what it would take for us to be together forever. And the answers which will remain written on my heart seem most often to be the assurances that we were on the path.

When I saw in my mind my grandmother rushing to my mother, I felt joy for them and a longing to bring my sweetheart and our children to such a reunion. That longing is why we must teach our children to pray.

I testify that our Heavenly Father answers the pleadings of faithful parents to know how to teach their children to pray. I testify that because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can have eternal life in families if we honor the covenants offered in this, His true Church. I so testify as His servant in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

Elder F. Enzo Busche has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the great Tabernacle Choir, the wonderful combined Missionary Training Center choir, the special Aaronic Priesthood choir from stakes in Roy, Hooper, Kaneshville, and Riverdale, Utah, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, the Church Health Unit nurses, and the ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center.

We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet service providers who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference in many countries.

As you leave this conference this afternoon, we ask you to obey traffic rules, use caution, and be courteous in driving.

The choir will now sing "Be Thou Humble." President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will then be our concluding speaker.

Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Darwin B. Christenson of the Seventy, and this conference will be adjourned for six months.

The choir sang "Be Thou Humble."

President Gordon B. Hinckley

"An humble and a contrite heart"

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget.
["God of Our Fathers, Known of Old,"
Hymns, no. 80]

These immortal words of Rudyard Kipling express my feelings as we bring to a conclusion this wonderful conference of the Church.

Following the benediction we shall depart this great hall, turn off the lights, and lock the doors. You who are listening across the world will switch off your television set or the radio or shut down the Internet. As we do so, I would hope that

we will remember that when all is over, "Still stands thine ancient sacrifice, An humble and a contrite heart" (*Hymns*, no. 80).

I hope that we shall ponder with subdued feelings the talks to which we have listened. I hope that we will quietly reflect on the wonderful things we have heard. I hope that we will feel a little more contrite and humble.

Apply the teachings from this conference

All of us have been edified. The test will come in the application of the teachings given. If, hereafter, we are a little more kind, if we are a little more neighborly, if we have drawn nearer to the Savior, with a more firm resolution to follow His teachings and His example, then this conference will have been a wonderful success. If, on the other hand, there is no improvement in our lives, then those who have spoken will have in large measure failed.

Those changes may not be measurable in a day or a week or a month. Resolutions are quickly made and quickly forgotten. But in a year from now, if we are doing better than we have done in the past, then the efforts of these days will not have been in vain.

We will not remember all that has been said, but there will arise from all of this a spiritual uplift. It may be indefinable, but it will be real. As the Lord said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

So it will be with the experience we have enjoyed. And perhaps out of all we have heard, there may be a phrase or a paragraph that will stand out and possess our attention. If this occurs, I hope we will write it down and reflect on it until we savor the depth of its meaning and have made it a part of our own lives.

Continue to discuss and study truths

In our family home evenings I hope we will discuss with our children these things and let them taste the sweetness of the truths we have enjoyed. And when the *Ensign* magazine comes out in November, with all of the conference messages, please don't just throw it aside with the comment that you have heard it all, but read and ponder the various messages. You will find many things that you missed when you listened to the speakers.

I have only one regret concerning the conference. That is that so few of the Brethren and sisters have opportunity to speak. It is simply a matter of the constraints of time.

Memories of conference sustain us

Tomorrow morning we will be back at our jobs, back to our studies, back to whatever constitutes the busy regimen of our lives. But we can have the memories of this great occasion to sustain us.

We can draw nearer to the Lord in our prayers. These can become conversations of thanksgiving. I can never fully understand how the Great God of the Universe, the Almighty, invites us as His children to speak with Him individually. How precious an opportunity is this. How wonderful that it actually happens. I testify that our prayers, offered in humility and sincerity, are heard and answered. It is a miraculous thing, but it is real.

Let us lower our voices in our homes. Let love abound and find expression in our actions. May we walk the quiet ways of the Lord, and may prosperity crown our labors.

The great "Hosanna" salutation in which we participated this morning should remain an unforgettable experience. From time to time, we can repeat quietly in our minds, when we are alone, those beautiful words of worship.

I bear witness of the truth of this work and of the living reality of God, our Eternal Father, and of His Only Begotten Son, whose Church this is. I extend my love to every one of you. God be with you, my dear, dear friends. I invoke the blessings of heaven upon you as we bid you good-bye for a season, in the name of Him who

is our Master, our Redeemer, and our King, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing."

Elder Darwin B. Christenson offered the benediction.

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC

The Tabernacle Choir provided music for the Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon sessions. Craig Jessop, Mack Wilberg, and Barlow Bradford directed the choir. John Longhurst, Richard Elliott, and Bonnie Goodliffe were the organists.

Music for the Saturday afternoon session was provided by a combined Missionary Training Center choir. The choir was directed by Douglas Brenchley. Linda Margetts was the organist.

Music for the general priesthood session was provided by an Aaronic Priest-

hood choir from stakes in Roy, Hooper, Kaneshville, and Riverdale, Utah. Michael Huff directed the choir, and Clay Christiansen was the organist.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

F. Michael Watson
Clerk of the Conference

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